

ASTOUNDING OUT OF SCHOOL TALES

EDUCATION OTHERWISE

10 YEARS & GOING STRONG

DECEMBER
no
50
1986

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LEARNING ... THROUGH
THE MACHINE ... OR BY
THE MOST AMAZING USE
OF YOUR OWN MIND!!
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"The FANTASTIC
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HAH! ANOTHER GROUP
PROCESSED! BRING
ON THE NEXT BATCH!

D.C.

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A SPECIAL THANKS TO MEG FROM THE TYPING POOL!

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Editor or Education Otherwise as a whole.

Editor for the FEBRUARY issue

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Contributions for the next edition should be sent to the editor by the deadline date and all material intended as such should be clearly marked 'FOR PUBLICATION'. Contributors are asked to ensure that they include their name and address.

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NOW IT CAN BE TOLD!!!

The COX'S Tale

The following is an interview of a family who have been involved in home education for 15 years off and on. They've had such a breadth of experience that there can't be many members who won't be able to identify with parts of their story. That's why I've been reluctant to reduce our 20 page transcript to anything less than 6 pages. It has not been to indulge your editor's egos. It is a reflection on my enthusiasm which has been given full rein in a special commemorative issue that has been rather thin on material.

KATE FREEMAN

VERSE ONE: ABOUT THE PARENTS' TURN TO BE CHILDREN

David: I went to a very good secondary school. I failed the eleven plus. I passed an examination to go to Bath Arts Secondary School, and I got a scholarship from Wiltshire County Council. My family were a working class family and it was expected that you'd go to a secondary modern school, leave school, get a job in a factory ... I was going to join the navy! When I was 12 or 13 that's what I was going to do. Kate: Was the school similar to an art college? D: No, before the days of comprehensive education we had things called technical schools, girls would go to 'commercial' schools, they were state schools, set up for those who did not go to grammar school but had a special aptitude. The Art School was set up after the war. The whole ethos of the school was to bring out creative ability in children, which they did very successfully. Very dedicated teachers, very likeable teachers. They were very sensitive people. Only 25 kids to a class. I lived in Trowbridge and I travelled in by train every day. I used to get up and catch an early train just to get there. It was a lovely building. It was just a lovely place to be. The teachers seemed to be interested in me as a person rather than what I would be required to provide in the way of examination passes. There was never any pressure at all. I went to the art school from the age of 11. Three of us took A level art when we were 15 and we passed. Youngest people ever to pass in the country. I was going to be an art teacher when I left school, I went to technical college in Bath to take 5 more O levels. But the contrast between the technical college and the art school was so great that I completely cracked! I could not cope with it. It seemed such a heartless environment. There were bored teachers just reading from notes. My mother thought that they were giving me a better education than most kids about, to enable me to get a better job and earn more money. It has coloured my decision about what my children get up to. Schools don't in any way bring out the kind of qualities I felt that school brought out in me. If there were a school like that, that was convenient to where we live, I'd send them. But there isn't. We produced work there that was better in quality and integrity than stuff you see in art colleges. And it was fresh because it wasn't tainted with the idea of artiness. I just think it's a terrific shame that it's not there any more.

Julia: My background is totally different from David's. Very caring but somehow uninspired parents. So I went to a nice primary school and grammar school and I was just always expected to do pretty well. I spent my school days in a kind of day dream. I did well. I got 11 0 levels and 3 A levels with good grades, but I can remember precious little of some of the stuff. There was no encouragement from my parents to go on and do anything with it, so I'm a bit cynical about qualifications. K: Did you want to do anything with your passes? J: It wasn't a question of what I wanted to do. It was a question of what they were going to let me do. K: Didn't you think of arguing? J: No there was no question of it. The way I argued was by ending up getting pregnant when I was doing my A levels! D: But you' like to have gone to art college. J: But I didn't know what I wanted, Kate, and when I met David I did know. As far as education goes it has influenced my attitude. D: I can remember so much about my education. And it seems because I didn't have the process of having to cram facts. It was a developing process.

VERSE TWO: ABOUT SOPHY & THE LEA IN 73

J: Our attitude towards children was very much taking it as it came. But it was when Sophy went to school that the rot really set in. She had been a very spontaneous little girl. She wasn't totally wild or difficult to cope with. At school, she suddenly began to conform like mad. There seemed to be some terrific pressure on her which was just turning her into a different person. She'd been there for a year. She started to get all these warts on her hands. D: Then at Easter time I went to Amsterdam, and I took her with me. Then all her warts disappeared. J: And she was just her usual old self. D: It was just like getting our daughter back. After a week or two at school she really tightened right up again. We decided well, that's it. J: We didn't know anything about deregistering or any of that stuff. She's very bright and picks things up quickly. So I just felt we could go on teaching her ourselves. D: We were trying to do what school would do, but it didn't work awfully well. K: Is that why you sent her back? D: No. We didn't send her back. We were coerced. We'd written a letter to the school saying that we were not sending her to school any more. A nice man came first and talked about how would she manage when she was grown up and wanted a job. He turned up a week later together with an adviser. D: He started talking about prosecuting us with a smile on his face. J: They didn't want it to come to that of course, but D: that's how it would be. And of course it frightened us. They even sent an educational psychologist. J: To give Sophy a test asking what butcher shops were and D: being vegetarian she didn't know what a butcher was! J: He ended up saying she was a very gregarious little girl and she would be happier with other children. D: So she went back to school. The dilemma with Sophy was that she liked having friends. All children do. But there was something going on there, and it was affecting her badly. She'd always related to adults in a very natural way. There was never an adult who had said to her before: 'Right you sit there and you move when I tell you.' She never got over it. So much of it was that she was too young to be at school, like so many children are at five. It's a shock. D: We only found out recently the situation regarding the law. J: We had absolutely no support from anybody. And I actually questioned my own sanity about my decision to take out Sophy in the first place. It looked like an over reaction. It wasn't that I wanted her around the house all day. I just didn't want her going where she was unhappy.

We moved to Bath when Sophy was 8 and Lucy 5. But Sophy had to move up to the Junior school. Horrible dark classrooms with children all in rows sitting at their desks writing away. Very grim. And Sophy began to develop a defensive attitude about herself. It was an extremely strict church of England school.

VERSE THREE: LUCY, LOOKING GLASS SCHOOL & THE CURATE'S EGG

J: Lucy was very happy at her new school in Bath. D: She had a nice teacher there. J: there were only 6 or 8 in her class. She was learning rapidly when we moved to Bradford, a term later. She was put in with a teacher who immediately put her right back to the beginning of 'the reading scheme'. Lucy was so outraged she lost all motivation. I don't think she really found it until she went to the Looking Glass School. She's talked a lot in recent years about how much she hated that primary school in Bradford. It had never occurred to her to tell us how unhappy she was there, and that she wanted to leave. D: The real crunch came when we took them out of school to go to the LGS, which wasn't very satisfactory. K: How did you get in touch with the school in the first place? Did you happen to know Peter Blake? D: Yes, he saw an article about me in the newspaper and told a mutual friend that he'd like to meet me. So they invited us for a game of rounders! The school was so small, only 12 children and they needed our kids to make up the numbers. We had a friend who was teaching pottery there, and she was able to drive them in now and again at first. They ended up being at the LGS full time because they wanted to have some kids from a humble background. The children were all rather wealthy. They thought it would do them good to be mixing with some children who weren't privileged. But we had to earn our keep there. It was very difficult. We went into it knowing that. They felt a certain sympathy for my art. J: It was very difficult for David because it used to leach any inspiration he had. The children were very spoilt and they were crying out for more inspiration - you know what it's like when you've them at home and someone stimulating comes into their lives. It was a lot of travelling for David. But our children seemed to enjoy it. Lucy was very happy there. She liked being able to go down to the river and sit outside to do her work. Apart from two terms at home and a short while at school, she stayed there until she was 12. Rufus experienced his first term of schooling there. David couldn't cope with all the driving and fell ill with raging sciatica. The children had two terms at home. During which time we had further dealings with the education advisors. By that time we realised we were not breaking the law but we just could not cope with the LEA interfering in our lives any more. So the following September we sent them back to school - Sophy to the Bradford-on-Avon comprehensive, Rufus to the local primary school, and Lucy to the Junior School. Later, when Lucy had just started comprehensive, she went back to the LGS, sometimes staying with a school friend who'd take her in from Bath. She grew more independent of us, and chose to continue her schooling at a school in Bath after the LGS closed. But Sophy had been the eldest at the LGS (12 years), and she didn't enjoy that. She felt like she was competing.

VERSE FOUR: MORE AGONIES, RUFUS, READING & THE COUNCIL ESTATE

J: When they left the LGS I remember we went through a harrowing, heartbreaking and soulsearching time. We just felt forced into a position of sending them back. D: We had them out of school for two terms. The tensions that arise in a house, with all the kids, with a baby...J: It's such a tiny council house and tiny garden. D: You can imagine trying to cope with it. There was also the

relationship of a husband and wife to cope with. We were so worried about them turning up waiting to see evidence. And they made it clear they would be. Tremendous pressure. J; So in the end we just gave up. It was an awful decision to have to make. It's important for other people to realise that it takes a long time perhaps to feel that what you're doing is the best. That time when we went to Silbury Hill, do you remember? Mums trouping off to school with their children. D:I felt very peculiar. J: I can remember feeling we had to produce some work. I thought I had to do a project on it. D: Just a complete waste of time, well, it isn't, but... Going to school was like a kick in the pants really, the effect it had on Rufus. He was only 6 and the teacher was very rude to Julia. She told her that Rufus was ESN... she told me that because he'd missed his first year of formal primary school education, he'd missed his basic phonic training and it was too late. D: He'd need special treatment. He had special remedial reading and I think that put him off reading altogether. This was the same teacher that Lucy had when she first started in Bradford. She put her right down to the beginning. Reading was hers and she had it taken away from her. She was told she could not do it. She told us not to encourage her to read at home. She wanted it all in her control. D: By then our attitude had changed. About this time I started working in Bristol on the YTS woodworking project. I took Rufus in with me quite regularly, Fergie also. J: He became their mascot. They loved him there and they used to make him little things like rockets and aeroplanes. D: He would tinker around and J; he enjoyed it of course. D: I was summoned to see the teacher.

I explained the type of work I did, the environment it was, and I said as far as I was concerned if we're talking about education, it's education! 'Yes Mr Cox,' she said, 'but fathers usually do things like this with their children at week ends. 'I thought: she's not switched on. She hasn't heard what I've said! I told her that it couldn't happen at week-ends. 'This is what I do. This is my work! I'll just reiterate how I feel and that if I choose to do this type of thing I will do it and that's all there is to it.' This particular point marks the time when I stopped having self doubt about it really. J: It's only recently that I have stopped feeling I have to be in control of the situation, but just let go of it. I think since they've learnt to read I've stopped worrying.

D: Rufus came home the other day and told me he and his friend Brumus had this classic conversation that school and exams will get him a job and that Rufus wouldn't get one. Rufus held his ground about it. J: He knows he doesn't need to worry about exams and all the rest of it. We've never ever taught him to read. Never sat him down and said 'Right from 10.30 we do reading now every day.' Rufus and Fergie have taught themselves to read. I say that with-out a shadow of exaggeration. When they were ready, we'd use the Ladybird reading books and we'd do a few pages. J: And then we'd go three months without touching one. Gradually Rufus got more and more distressed because he felt he wasn't able to read. He was really upset. And suddenly this year it's all just clicked. And he realised there was no mystery about it. So learning to read has taught him that he can do anything if he wants to. He's done it for himself. J: I was thinking earlier that we ought to be doing some maths this winter. But I don't think I shall worry. We'll see what they say. Fergie is very reticent about lots of new things, but you know he's going to do it when he's ready. When he wants to find out the answer about how figures work, he'll get on with it. Like he did with reading. More and more they seem to find their own resources.

D: The standard question if an adult sees a child is 'What school do you go to?' 'How old are you? Oh! You must be at school... do you enjoy school?' I know Rufus used to feel very uncomfortable about being asked that. He just said things like 'Oh, I'm on holiday at the moment.' I think he was afraid of what might happen if he did say he was at home, out of school. J: There were people around where we live who would say 'Why aren't you at school?' they'd say, assuming the policeman's role. D: And they have called the kids 'gyppos', 'scruffs', not part of normal society. K: Are your kids still indoors if possible until 3pm? Yes, to avoid the attention of the authority. There are plenty of busy bodies around who could report us. So I think it's better they just stick around until 3pm. I don't want to be bothered with County Hall. D: But going on from there, I have noticed how many people are really interested. They'll say: I wish, or, my aunty, or, my sister, has a child who is getting on terribly at school.

VERSE FIVE: A YTS EXPERIENCE & PINK TINTS

D: I know enough about schools to know that they are not doing what they set out to do. I work with young men who are just victims, they've been cruelly abused by it all. And I mean that. Cruelly abused. There was a young man who I asked to go and get a piece of wood, a piece of timber, it was a piece of 2x3, 36" long. I showed him the dimensions on the rule. The rule was from 1 to 36. I gave him the rule. I pointed him towards the woodstore. I said go and get it please. He hovered about and said 'could you show me here where 36 is?' I had assumed people can read and write. I just didn't think he couldn't. So I pointed to it on the rule. 36 was painted there in red. I had to then give him a piece of wood of the dimensions to take to the store. Now, what's happened to that young man? He's working as a farm labourer now. Which is all he's capable of doing. That's not to denigrate his intelligence, or his innate spirit, it is what he is going to do in life. Simply because nobody has given thought about his essential nature. Schools only work for a few. And it's working for fewer and fewer. J: It's working for Lucy because she is so determined and she wants to be there, but it isn't the perfect situation. D: Schools are not about the innate quality that people have, their essence which just needs to grow. J: School is an institution and that's all there is to it. And everyone has to work for the greater good of the institution. Let me give you one example. Lucy and Sophy had pink tints in their hair at the comprehensive during their first years. Lucy's woodworking teacher humiliated her in front of the class and Sophy's year tutor came to see us in our kitchen. J: He perfectly understood about her individuality and all the rest of it, but once you've got one girl in a class doing something like that it just disrupted the class and others wanted to do it. We asked, 'Why ever not? They'll all calm down after a bit and then that'll be fine.' Their attitude was that they could not control them. D: We don't particularly identify with pink hair. J: We thought it looked pretty stupid too. But we didn't care. He ended up with this classic comment 'Well, I'd like to go to work in an old jumper and a pair of jeans but I can't.' Which is right back to what I was saying about institutions. I asked if there was anything in their behaviour that was in any way disruptive? 'Oh no, they're exemplary. They're really lively children. So mature, they give to the class, it was not a question of...'

VERSE SIX: SOPHY LEAVES HOME

K: What do you feel when you look back over Sophy's life? J: I could say we've made a real mess of things for Soph. K: And do you

feel terribly guilty? J: You have to learn to accept in life. You have to learn that the way things are, is the way things are and that's that. D: I don't accept we've made a real mess of things. K: What does she think? J: Sometimes she thinks she shouldn't have left school at 15. But she knows she wasn't working hard enough so she probably wouldn't have passed her O levels. After leaving school she got involved in a little nursery school in Bath. Then she came to live with us before^{9th} on a YTS drama course, which plunged her into a terrible depression. It was J: awful. D: We would settle down to go to sleep at 11 o'clock at night and then she would come in at 2 in the morning. J: Plus we'd got the baby waking up anyway. D: It was very disruptive. J: With Sophy, things reached such a pitch with her living her own life that we ended up saying: go and live it somewhere else. She felt so strongly that she had to do what she had to do, but we just didn't want to know. So she moved down the road to a bedsit at her friends', and she was free to come in whatever time she wanted without waking up everyone. D: But she's come out the other side. She realised that if she was going to do anything she just had to get on and do it. I think basically she's got an ability to live with herself. She's getting much more like that. Both Soph and Lucy have always been very independent and if we've given them nothing else, I think that's something we have given them. J: I think her life has given^{her} insights which most people don't ever have. And I envy her for that. I was so lacking in confidence. She doesn't worry about things all the time. She's a lot more true to herself. Whereas, I feel I'm two people.

VERSE SEVEN: EO RULES OK WITH A FEW MISTAKES

K: Have you evolved a philosophy that has helped you? D: Our main motivating factor right at the beginning was state intervention in our lives. Just as we didn't want the medical profession to step in and say we have to have our babies in hospital, we resented this kind of authoritarian intrusion into our lives. I just decided I wasn't going to have that. At times I felt I could not cope because I didn't feel I was in the right situation. I didn't have enough energy. I had too many children around. K: Are you authoritarian towards your kids? J: I'm not a verse to laying down the law about certain things which make sense. In the same way that I appreciate certain laws on this planet. D: We feel very differently now - from feeling vulnerable and feeling in the victim role, I feel if they want to do anything, they can come to me and I'll tell them what they can and can't do. I feel now a certain strength about it all. We can afford to make mistakes. That's what life is about anyway. You don't decide what you're going to do with your life. J: It never works out how you think it will. D: If we have a philosophy, I think that's it. Life is just a thing that happens. It's not a thing that you set out to do, to live your life. You just live it. Pretty much the children do what they want to do. I just think there is plenty of time to decide you have a purpose in life, and that's when you're ready to make that decision.



GOSH! DID WE SAY ALL THAT?

WE MUST HAVE TALKED FOR HOURS

HOURS AND HOURS BLURBLE... BLABBLE

ER... YES I THINK SO

YES WE DID... BIAH BLAH BLAH...

.... RHUBARB...

YAWN

The Old Schoolhouse,
Nether Lening,
Worshshire.

EO 123

13th, October, 1986.

Dear Editors,



I put a question to a Radio Devon 'phone in about the GCSEs - to the effect that as GCSE appears to be largely continuous assessment how would that affect EOers? The panel consisted of a doctor from Exeter University and the Chief Education Officer for Somerset.

Their reply was that to allow for circumstances where the assessment was impossible (they cited correspondence courses, children abroad and non-school attendance) - the DES and the Secondary Examination Council had allowed for that to be replaced by an additional paper thus bringing the whole thing back to examination only and that EO type pupils could be considered under this scheme as 'private' entries.

Now whilst I agree that many EO parents may not see the formal academic qualification rigmarole as desirable or a goal to be aimed at until the child concerned wants to, some must feel the other way; that once approximately the right age or maturity have been reached some paper qualifications do make integration into our rather blinkered society easier...

However or whatever your views, it is at least encouraging that the door remains open even if only at the behest of correspondence course colleges, because I had feared that this (GCSE) might well be an (incidentally provided) establishment tool to remove the qualification option without school attendance and hence eliminate EO without actually saying so.

Yours,

Jonathon Allen, 4 Ashleigh Road, Barnstaple, Devon

I am making a study of home-based education as part of my final year as a student teacher and have enjoyed reading about your experiences in the newsletters. If any of you are willing to share more of your experiences with me, particularly why you opted for home education, how you have coped and how the LEA reacted, I would be very grateful. Please get in touch with me at the following address.

Yours hopefully,

Joanna Hill, Westminster College, North Hinksey, Oxford.

Joan Andrew (Oct NL) and Catherine Barrett (Aug NL) both tell us that they do not like the column 'Education through the Press' but do not tell us why. If they dislike in general the attitude of the media to educational matters then I can suggest no remedy. If, however, they feel that the column is not representative of press coverage may I suggest that they send cuttings they approve to Sarah Guthrie. It is noticeable how few people bother to contribute. We can hardly expect Sarah to spend all her time and money combing through every newspaper and magazine.

Yours sincerely,

Janice Owen, 101 Fortescue Road, Edgware, Middx HA8 OHW

'Education through the Press' has always been one of my favourite columns and I personally don't regard it as 'too biased' as its critics claim it is. A degree of partiality is to be expected, and, as someone said, CND would not publish an article extolling the virtues of Cruise weapons so EO should not be expected to report on various successes at schools, if, indeed, there are any! The editors always seem to include changes in syllabuses and such like which is not criticism of the system but informing members of alterations in it and this gives the column some sort of balance. Please continue with 'Education through the Press' as it is relevant, topical and informative.

Yours,

Ros Normandale, Enwood House, The Crescent, High Green Lane, Sunnyside, Newcastle, Tyne and Wear NE16 5DH
(taken from a letter originally sent to Sarah Guthrie)

Thanks for publishing details of the 'Libertarian Education Conference' in the August newsletter. Over 150 people took part including lots from EO and a good time was had by all. The conference agreed to set up a Network of people who want freedom in education; freedom for all learners - young or old, in schools, and out, at home and abroad. It's a way the EO philosophy can be applied and supported across the whole spectrum of educational activities. The Network will complement rather than compete with EO. We shall certainly help to publicise and promote EO's work. In fact we are currently putting together a special four page feature on EO to be published in 'Lib Ed' magazine. This will detail case histories of four EO families, include a history of EO and offer a page of analysis. We would love to hear from any EO members about their experiences and ideas. Do write and give us your point of view.

For the liberation of learning,

Chris Draper, ^{Education}Libertarian Magazine, 36 Sussex Way, Holloway, London N7 6RS

HELP!! I need contact with other women. I am 38 years old, a single mum living with my children, Matty, fourteen years old, Leila, eight and Danny, four, in a council house in the country, supported by social security. I do not fit into the 'pigeon hole' made for me and am feeling isolated here on the Isle of Wight. There seems a lack of open-minded, thinking, non-sexist, non-racist people here or maybe I have just been unable to meet them in the twelve years since we moved here from London!

If there are any single mums who would like to write to me or ring me and maybe visit our untidy but friendly welcoming home please contact me. We can always find room for people to sleep, either by juggling children or putting sleeping bags down. So, we will hope to hear from anyone who is interested in either writing or visiting us which will relieve the isolation of this slightly unconventional, (aren't many EOers?) family.

Happy EOing to all from Jude, Matty, Leila and Danny Ashley-Walker
also HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR
1, The Firs, Dodpits, Ringwood. Nr. Yarmouth, Isle of Wight PO41 OTL

I am writing to express our appreciation for all that we have learnt through contact and membership of EO and to say how much this has given our confidence a boost in taking our daughter out of school. Prior to this I was among the ranks of those who say 'Oh, but you can't do that' when stating that we are educating our daughter at home, which prompts me to suggest that as parents we don't hear nearly enough about just what rights we have or what alternatives are available when faced with a severe problem such as we have been. So you can see why we are grateful for the help we have received from EO and even the forthcoming visits from the LEA inspectors won't be so daunting as they would have seemed before.

Mrs Ruth A. Grigg

My name is Eleanor Grigg and I am fourteen years old. I have had the serious illness of clinical depression and school phobia. My mum, dad and older sister have helped me a lot, especially my mum who has stayed up with me until the early hours of the morning. I have cried without knowing what for and I have hated seeing people or speaking to people. I had got to the stage where I couldn't cope with school and I cried most of the night about it. I saw a psychiatrist which was a horrible experience as I couldn't face interrogation. He said I should be sent back to school full-time. Later I went back part-time, mornings only, and my parents who had stood firmly together through everything, finally took me out of school. In September, 1986, my mum started teaching me at home with help from the library and the school. The school has been very helpful and have provided us with curriculum suggestions for some subjects I am taking. I am enjoying education at home and I am learning more than I would at school. I am very slowly recovering from depression, which I thought at one time, that I never would. I would like to know if there is anyone out there who has had depression or is still suffering from it, who is approximately my age. Who has been taken out of school because of it. It would very much encourage me to receive a letter describing your situation. If you feel able please write to:-

Eleanor Grigg, 11 Fairfield Road, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 2JU

I received the following letter further to an article in the local newspaper about our homeschooling. I thought other EOers might be interested in reading it. Val Lighten, West Yorkshire

Dear Mrs Lighten,

I was most interested to read of your decision to educate your boy at home. Is 'Education Otherwise' aware that a College and Centre exist which enable parents etc. to teach children from five or six

years up to sixteen or so?

The Parents' National Educational Union was founded by Charlotte Mason last century because she was dissatisfied with State Education. The Parents Union School sends out curricula term by term, with lists of books to buy and help in using them.

I trained there in 1925 and 26(!) and my last job was in 1959 at the Practising School which still exists in Ambleside. Before that I was the only one of three teachers with any sort of training, in a small private boarding school near Salisbury, Wiltshire. The Principal thought it would be a good idea to be examined for efficiency and a pundit from State Inspectorate came and heard a good many lessons. He was astounded and said we were doing a year's work in one term and he didn't believe it. So we showed him some exam papers from the last year and he was utterly convinced - we passed with flying colours. I was taking Shakespeare with ten year olds and they had organised themselves in groups, rehearsing and reading it on their own. He said, "Ten year olds - enjoying Shakespeare!" and I said, 'of course: we don't water down anything. Children love long words and phrases - they have Bunyon's Pilgrims's Progress read to them at the age of seven." He gave up. Education can and should be enjoyable. The method is not to talk a lot - this destroys the child's natural concentration. If they do 90% of the reading and the 'telling back', a narration of what they have read, they remember much of it till the end of term. We never revised! If you are interested write to P.N.E.U. Ambleside, Cumbria

Yours sincerely,

Miss Beryl Watchurst, 10 Crossbeck Road, Ilkley, West Yorks LS29 9JN

I was sent the following and think it shows how we do get to help all folks - not just the elite. Janet Everdell

Dear Education Otherwise,

I am not a member of your organisation but I have an interest in it very much. I have been reading some of the experiences that some of your members have had to put up with.

I got to know about EO through my sister who is having great difficulty with the Education System. I too have been having some problems with my young son but I have just changed his school to see how if anything it will help him. He seems O.K. at the present but I don't know if this will carry on.

I was hoping that you would print my letter on behalf of my sister who sadly has lost one battle against the system. Cherie has never been happy about school. She has had difficulty for as long as I can remember. Sharon, her mother, is a one parent family and as you can imagine it is very difficult. I never realised what she was going through with Cherie until I started to have my own problems with my son.

I would like to tell what I can about Cherie's fight because I feel so frustrated at the way in which her and her mother have been treated. Cherie had to appear in court for not attending school. She has suffered many mental stresses and even physical symptoms as a result of all this.

The magistrates were totally inconsiderate of her problems but Sharon's biggest fight was with the social services. Right from the beginning they have hounded Sharon and Cherie. They brought court proceedings to get a care order on Cherie and kept trying to enforce it. Many times she had to go to court to fight the care order. By this time the strain was telling on both of them. The

case was adjourned to force Cherie into going to school. She had six weeks to go to school. She had to have seven days off school through illness and when she went to court a few days ago the magistrates gave the social services what they wanted. They put her in an assessment centre for eight weeks. It broke both their hearts. What is wrong with this country and when are they going to start changing things in the education system. It's ironical to think that it was the Social Services that were the culprits. All that time and money wasted on court cases and not once did they really offer Sharon any real help in the way that she needed it. They never offered her a chance to get Cherie any beneficial help with her problem. She is thirteen years old. They could have provided her with a home tutor and assessed her on a daily basis. It seems to me that if money is needed in education as they claim then why do they waste so much on harassing people.

To put Cherie away for eight weeks as they claim they will do, if it is true (because they did nothing but lie in court) what good is it going to do her. It won't take away her fears and anxieties she has towards school. Her mother is very distraught. She has had a long fight and feels that she has lost. I would like to know from anyone who has had the same fight as Sharon has had. And if there is any advice as to what she can do to get the care order on her daughter lifted, (it is there until she is eighteen years old) I would like to hear from you very much.

Mrs. A. Jackson, 2 Nelson, Crescent Lea, Preston, Lancs

P.S. From Janet Everdell - she has been given help.

I am a working class married woman with three children out of school (a girl seven years and two boys two and a half and eight and a half). I would like to express my feelings on some of the comments made by Mr. Millen (August newsletter) and those in reply (October NI).

Two years ago the knowledge of an organisation of people educating their children out of school gave us the extra confidence we needed to de-register our children from school. I'm sure that EO has given the same help or determination to other working class families.

We are not active members of the organisation but as a family we are passive members because we believe that EO does work as a pressure group. Perhaps it does not 'tell the world' but lack of financial and physical support make it difficult to be any more effective (people committed to giving their time and energy in any pressure group are few and far between).

I do not believe my own personal commitment or involvement in my family is going to serve society by spreading the word of alternatives to the education system. To some extent home education further isolates the nuclear family and makes some levels of communication more difficult. In terms of our family it has been a very positive thing to do, but in the wider terms of society, yes it is a distinctly elitist action of which I am well aware.

I consider our family and all other EO families to be in the fortunate and privileged position of being able to conduct and afford an alternative to the education system. Low income (or lack of income) can easily be a barrier for working class families but often there are other more difficult barriers to overcome such as

lack of confidence, conditioning and intimidation. In my experience I find too many people have no grasp of the reality of working class life or what it feels to be working class (of which I am proud to be.) It makes easy the statement 'we are always on or below the social security levels of income and we can manage.'

I find it easy to sympathise with any family regardless of class, who is genuinely concerned about their children's welfare but who feels that home education is too hard a task to undertake.

Yes Mr. Millen we in EO need to ^{be} reminded of our fortunate positions and thank you for inspiring me to write this letter.

Yours faithfully,

G.Barker, 11 Norfolk Street, York

I am not usually in the habit of writing to newspapers or magazines but, just occasionally, I read something that gets my back up just enough to make me feel that I must put pen to paper.

Reading the arrogant letter by David Griffiths (October NL) was one such occasion. Quite honestly, I don't know why he bothered to repay his subscription to EO if that's what he really thinks of us. Who is he to sit in judgement and say that a parent is 'over protective' or 'arrogant' in daring to believe that their method of teaching could be better than the 'professional' teachers? Also, if parents want to raise their children in Karl Marx's doctrines, then surely it is their right to do so. It's not illegal, (yet!!) (Incidentally I notice he doesn't mention 'Right wing' tendencies! Or are there no such thing?) As for people using their children as cheap labour, Education Officers would soon find that out and to say that some are too lazy and disorganised to get their children prepared for school is just laughable! It is much, much easier in physical terms to turf your children out of the house each morning and leave the teaching to someone else.

I am not so sure that we should be trying to fit our children into 20th century Britain. In my view there's not a lot to recommend it. It's far more important that they grow up as caring and capable human beings, prepared to try and make their own little part of Britain a better place with real values. Square pegs in round holes may be, but I'd rather that than trying to squeeze them into the mould.

But, aside from his views on EO members and we're all entitled to them, the thing that upset me most was that he deserted a family when they needed him most. It could have been a great help to them in putting their 'case' to have had a tutor in their employ but at the first idle threat by an LEA official, (How can you aid and abet an illegal act when none is being committed?) he ran out on them, thinking more of his reputation than of a family in difficulty.

Readers will form their own opinions on the suitability of Mr. Griffiths as a tutor but I for one wouldn't let him near my children (except perhaps as an example of what not to become!)

EO is all about 'the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children' and most of us are striving (alone or with outside help) to do just that.

Joan Andrew, 50 Broad Park Road, Coventry CV2 1DD

I would like to reply to David Griffiths' contribution to the October issue. I feel for him that he is self-employed and hard up, a common situation these days. I'm also sorry that he got no support, as he claims, when he was in trouble with the law over giving tuition to deschooled children.

EO's membership covers a broad spectrum and I uphold this, believing in freedom of opinion. It seems that he and I are at opposite ends. Many withdraw their children from school because they feel that the education they receive in school is not academic enough and perhaps it would be better for David Griffiths to cater mainly for those children, as well as for those attending school, whose parents want them to have extra coaching for examinations. Some of the latter are hard up too, which I think is sad.

I would like to now state my case, following his points:

1. I want to protect my children from all that is harmful in the present education system, which reflects and seeks to perpetuate the capitalist system under which we live.
2. I want to encourage my children, particularly as they are boys to share in the running of our home, which they enjoy doing.
3. I regard the present education system, and anything which emulates it, as a deeply damaging waste of time. So did John Holt.
4. My children are continually exposed to the capitalist ethos and I wish them to be aware of alternatives to this and be free to make up their own minds.
5. I am preparing my children for life. If that entails them going to school, because they want to, I am confident that the preparation is adequate.
6. I am a qualified teacher and I believe that all people can enable others to learn. People with school teaching experience, people who have followed extensive academic study and people who are involved in specialist work with people have a great deal to contribute, but no more than those whose experience is in other fields.

My children are over eleven, educated out of school and their independence, maturity and co-operativeness have been commented on.

As a socialist I believe that the examination system is competitive and divisive. If my children went to school they would probably appear to do well, at others' expense, because they are white, male and middle class.

I appreciate and share the problem of wanting to help and to make a living. I could not work as a teacher in the conventional sense now as it goes against my convictions to do what would be expected of me. At present I draw Supplementary Benefit about which I have no qualms as I am one of four million unemployed and my children and I have a right to live. I am involved in my emancipation as a woman, the education of my children and in working for peace and non violent revolution.

I am not clear from reading David Griffiths why he supports EO since he says that most children are better at school and does not elaborate on what children would be more suited to home 'tuition'. His letter sounds to be as though he is touting for work in which case, in my opinion, he had better stick to extra tuition for 'wealthy middle class' school attenders. Incidentally none of us deschool our children 'just for a laugh'. It's a time consuming and risky business!

Jill Hodge, 10 Granby Road, Firth Park, Sheffield S5 6WD

Dear EO,

When our first annual subscription renewal came through the door recently it caused us to reflect on the last year. Since joining EO we have found the magazine and EO's other publications very useful and have enjoyed reading about other people's experiences with educating their children at home. We would like to see more items of a similar nature in the newsletters together with advice on dealing with LEAs, highlighting problems of exams, child benefits after 16, etc. and perhaps less of the trend which seems to have occurred over the recent months of criticizing the philosophies and approaches of others.

We started teaching our children at home at the beginning of this year after about 3 months of thinking and reading. We have three children, Michael 11, Joanne 9, and Daniel 5. Daniel had not started school whereas Michael and Joanne went to the same infants then junior schools. They were happy there and in general we were pleased with their education. Our concerns started with the imminent change to secondary school. We were worried by the falling standards, lack of staff, and the increasing problems of drugs, smoking etc. As Christians we teach our children to respect other people, especially those in authority, and impress upon them the importance of good manners, discipline and the family unit as a basis for a stable society. These standards are so often denied in schools and God is ignored from the science labs to the RE class.

We had no problem deschooling our children and we wrote to the LEA giving a broad outline of the subjects we intended to cover together with a short book list. The children wanted to keep the Maths and English books they had been using at school and preferred using textbooks as a basis for science, geography, history etc. They like to have a daily timetable of subjects each week but it is of course flexible, especially the amount of time they choose to spend on each subject. Written work is done mainly in the mornings with afternoons less structured. In the summer they spent more time outside enjoying the sun and in winter we do more art and craft work. We also use some of the more useful and interesting programmes on television.

The children prefer being at home and have particularly commented on the benefits of no wasted time queuing at the teacher's desk, a quiet atmosphere in which to work, the freedom to plan their work as they wish, and getting through more work at home! They have certainly become more confident in all areas of life. Daniel has made a good start on the three R's and he loves looking at books. I have to be careful not to try and push him but just go at his own pace, however slow it seems. I found it took months for me to feel I had got into a routine. I learnt so much about the children, and not only what they were really like but also what I was really like! It has also taken me time to get used to the noise level and to being "on call" all of the time. On days when I could pack it all in I just think of how short a time we have with our children and remember that there will be plenty of years left once they have all gone their separate ways.

The education inspector visited us in July and was very helpful. When we tried to impress him with our intended use of the computer he told us to forget about most of the "educational" software and use games to introduce it to the younger ones. He also recommended the use of a word-processing package for some of the written work, both factual and creative, as the ability to produce a high quality final copy encouraged a much higher standard of work. He also stressed the need to make the children's learning relevant to everyday life - which is exactly what home education can so easily do.

A piece of advice we found helpful and reassuring was originally given to missionaries who chose to educate their own children abroad. It was that you are likely to produce good results with whatever books and methods you choose provided that you stick with them. Chopping and changing only creates uncertainty in the children who suffer as a result. It removed the nagging doubts about our methods and materials when compared with those adopted by others!

We belong to a church where there are quite a few families teaching their children at home and we try to ensure that our teaching is Bible-based although we use different methods and varied books. We would be happy to hear from other Christian families doing likewise.

I hope this short account of our first year 'teaching our own' will be of interest and perhaps help to others.

Yours sincerely,

Trevor and Helen Pocock

62 Downs Road,
Dunstable,
Bedfordshire,
LU5 4DE



HO HO HO!
A MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY
NEW YEAR
TO ALL OUR READERS

The Remedial Trap Revisited

I had a telephone call from Christopher's West Indian teacher recently. She told me that, as I expected he would, he had become an ignorant black hooligan and had been duly suspended. It seems that he had hit a girl who had been tormenting him. I add in haste that 'ignorant black hooligan' is the role which the school has assigned to him, not my own estimation of his character. I ask readers to believe me when I say that a school which is capable of turning a nervous, bewildered, neurotically compliant youngster like Christopher into a petty criminal deserving to be suspended, in only five months, has developed a new concept in the technology of crassness. Stupidity like this does not come cheap. Only highly paid professionals can be relied on to supply it in its purest form. God help us all!

Christopher R. Shute.

a stroll down memory lane.....

TEN YEARS ON

1
DECEMBER
1976

1
DECEMBER
1986

with Sandie Cottee

Is it really ten years since we joined EO? It really doesn't seem that long and yet it must be Marc is ten and a half now and was just about crawling around the day I saw Dick Kitto on a TV 'Open Door' programme. At that time I had not consciously thought about Marc's future 'education' and yet as Dick Kitto finished speaking I knew Marc would not go to school.

I am sure that many of my friends, when I spoke to them about EO thought that I would 'come to my senses' by the time Marc reached his third birthday. However Marc never did go to school and whether or not I ever did come to my senses is another matter!

I sometimes wonder what we might now have been doing had EO not been formed. Had I not found out that school is not compulsory I am sure Marc and his younger sister Emma would have taken the conventional step to school. I doubt if it would have occurred to me to do otherwise, unless I had been put into a situation whereby I was forced to look for an alternative, or found out by other means. But EO was formed and it has become very much part of our life ... in fact I can't imagine life without it just now.

We first met other Eo families at Lower Shaw farm in Swindon. It was the week of the Queen's Silver Jubilee and we got involved in street parties en route which made the weekend for us, even more eventful. It was such a relief to meet other parents who felt the same way about their children until then many mothers I'd met seemed so preoccupied with all the material things concerning babyhood - the latest design highchair or how early you can get your child into shoes! At Lower Shaw Farm I was not alone in my way of thinking. Other parents also enjoyed playing with their children, talking together and sharing experiences. The membership at that time was slowly building up but after asking around, at Lower Shaw Farm, we found our nearest members were probably James and Jackie Fearnley in Suffolk. Today we have just under sixty family members in Essex alone.....

Over the years we have made many friends within EO, in fact it has become like an extended family. Some friends have since moved away,

to Ireland, Australia or other parts of England but we keep in touch by letter. Through EO we have also become friends with a family in Florida and another in France, both of whom visit England from time to time and visit us. How things have changed in those ten years. I recall our initial excitement when a 'local' family joined EO. Now we have many EO friends we can visit or meet for the day! I wonder if EO will continue to grow to the same extent over the next ten years. I don't see why not. Recently I was invited to give a talk to the Green Party. Since I do not like talking in public I asked another EO member along for moral support... As it turned out we were overwhelmed by the support and understanding given by the Green Party members. Other EO members had also got to hear about the meeting and showed up in force (perhaps they are members of the Green Party, I never did get a chance to find out!) It was a very positive and interesting meeting and we left with promises of sending in our ideas and thoughts on education, for the Green Party to use in their manifesto. Public awareness of EO is certainly on the increase and that in itself must be an achievement. When people used to hear about our home education they often appeared shocked (that it was legal) or speechless (at the sheer idea of it!) ... now more and more frequently we are met with "Oh! I've read/heard about people like you". I'm sure that EO will continue to grow both in public awareness and in membership. I'm certain that for the vast majority of parents it will never become a 'school' or 'home' question - EO never did set out to compete against the school system. However, for those parents, who, like ourselves, choose to take responsibility for our children's education or for those who for varying reasons withdraw a child from school to educate at home, EO fulfills and extremely helpful (some might say even essential) role.

Finally what are our future plans? In many ways I feel we have been very lucky. Finding out about EO, as we did, while our children were so young gave us plenty of time to reconsider our plans. However, I don't recall much deliberation and if anything, I grew stronger in my resolve. The only thing that might have changed this was if either Marc or Emma showed strong feeling of wanting to go to school. As it happens neither of them have ever expressed any interest in going to school. I have made a point of not excluding schools, by going along to see the children's friends in the Christmas school plays and sports days but Marc and Emma are totally indifferent and don't feel they miss anything by not going to school. Except, that is, when Emma expressed a wish to wear a school uniform. A blue skirt, cardigan and white blouse soon solved that problem!

We remain flexible, ready to change or try new ideas as we go along and we know that at the back of our minds that schools offer an alternative. However I don't envisage that Marc or Emma will ever go to school and that, if they did, we should probably choose to move to somewhere like Devon so that they could attend the 'small' school. I doubt that this will arrive since Marc and Emma are still very keen to learn at home and so long as Brian and I are happy that home education is satisfying the needs of Marc and Emma as individuals and for us as a family, then I see no reason for change. I can only hope that the next few years continue to bring us much pleasure and satisfaction. Good luck to EO for the next ten years!

Sandie Cottee, 17 South View Road, Rettendon Common, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 8DX

THOUGHTS ON SCHOOL LIFE AND SOME EO REMINISCENCES by Jackie Fearnley

One or two people have asked for a follow-up to the article I wrote about our experiences of schooling after so many years of the children being at home. Since we were involved with the setting up of EO the tenth anniversary newsletter seemed a good place for it.

We now have five children: Rose thirteen, Lillah ten, Felix almost eight, Hugo nearly five and Cecily just seven months. Up until two years ago none of the children had been to school, apart from a week or two for the girls at a small Steiner school. I have written before about how we decided the time had come for Rose and possibly Lillah, then eleven and eight, to try school (August 1985 NL) explaining the good and bad that had come out of the experience for all of us. I still feel it marked the end of a very happy time for all the children and that eight was too young for Lillah to start. On the other hand it was very necessary for Rose to take a step out into the world. She has grown a great deal in confidence, is enjoying friends and is glad to get back to school after the holidays. This last term Lillah too has really settled at school - positively enjoying going rather than feeling she'd miss the company of Rose if she stayed at home. At first she'd been through a certain amount of teasing and experienced being excluded from a group - a tendency which seems almost inevitable among groups of children of a certain age when left to their own devices. I'm sure such experiences can be avoided almost entirely if the children don't go to school until at least the age of eleven or twelve and before that meet friends in their own home environment.

I felt that because Lillah went to school when the time seemed right for Rose she has grown up a little too quickly. At around the age of nine she seemed to more or less stop playing imaginative games of her own though she was very prepared to help her younger brothers in theirs, and became much more aware of clothes and fashion than Rose ever was. Even a recent friendship with a boy was translated for her into something much more sophisticated and complicated by some of the older ones. Of course one cannot control everything that happens to one's children and each one's life is going to be different.

We have had quite a problem with bad language being brought back from school. With the older ones it wears off to some extent but at Felix's age it goes straight in and is not able to be altered by reasoning.

Another way which the growing up process has been accelerated perhaps too much by school is their increased awareness of the outside world and the problems in our society. At home this happens more gradually (e.g. a rabbit dying of myxomatosis makes Felix rage about what humans can do) whereas in school the information is at one step removed from the reality and so in some ways harder to deal with - children report to each other what they have read in the paper or heard their parents talking about. It's not a question of sheltering them from reality but of the age at which it is possible for children to cope with such things. They need the chance to grow strong in a very stable and loving environment before having to cope with other issues.

It is important not to blame 'school' as an entity for influences that come from particular people. On the other hand, by sending children to school the parent gives up the element of control over who they are with and what they are doing - even what they are eating - and has to come to terms in some way with this fact.

Although Botton is a very small school (around forty pupils aged between 7 and 14) and the curriculum and manner of teaching is very different from a state school, yet the experience is comparable in that you have to be there during set hours and do more or less as you are told. For this reason there are some problems with discipline and this makes me wonder how far does the atmosphere in which it is learnt affect the content of the lesson? However artistic and appropriate the content, does it inevitably become labelled as 'school work'? How do you balance this against the benefit of working and learning in a group? Is the experience of having to adapt one's behaviour for the group and of submitting to authority in any case a necessary one for a child?

We have always said that if the bad influences seemed to outweigh the good then we'd have to think again. This happened in the case of Felix. We sent him off with the girls at the age of six and three quarters without too much thought. He wanted to go and had reached the age for starting in a Waldorf school. However it gradually became clear that in his case it was not an unmitigated blessing. He began to miss days and not want to get up in the morning. After a period of not going and then another of being there, he is now at home doing what he enjoys - mainly playing, helping with the baby, making and mending things. His teacher was sorry to see him go and he had made a real contribution to the group but he found it too much to be doing writing and arithmetic even in the gradual way dictated by the Waldorf School curriculum. Apparently Steiner himself thought that reading and writing were more appropriate left until around the age of ten or so but to some extent had to adapt to society's requirements.

Apart from anything else the school day was too long for Felix, with a ten mile minibus journey as well and I must say that I think the experience did him more harm than good. He feels quite conscious of his slowness with letters and numbers and has an image of himself as stupid, which he quite often proceeds to act out. But when making things - kites, pottery, model boats etc. it is quite a different story and I do still feel that at such an early age there is nothing automatically good about being with a group of one's peers for much of the time. Felix is the sort of person who for one reason or another takes on quite an extrovert role which can degenerate into silliness. He is much better in a more controlled environment with one or two adults around whom he can talk to and learn from and with friends coming to the house when possible. Of course we stay open to the possibility of him going back to school at a later stage, depending too on our own situation.

Hugo is a different story again. He is much calmer and more friendly with letters and numbers at age nearly five than Felix is at nearly eight. At present he is quite happy with his life at home and doesn't want to go to 'anybody's school'. I think we are now at a point where we haven't many illusions about either home or school. Rose now says that eventually she may want to go to another school. She feels slightly cramped and labelled where she is and wants the chance to be someone different. She has also got the idea that their school is 'behind' and would like to do some 'O' and 'A' levels. Her idea would be to go to the Small School in Devon or be taught at home with some friends.

It seems obvious that certain schools can be right for some children for perhaps a part of their time of being 'school age' but that many others are better off not going at any point in their lives. I think

growing up in this society the children would have wondered what school was all about if they didn't have some experience of it. It seems to help a tremendous amount if you can reverse things so that being at home becomes the norm and school is the option that has to be very carefully considered and not entered upon lightly.

This story would probably have been very different if we had not been so fortunate as firstly to have seen the TV film about the White family, secondly to have been involved with the formation of Education Otherwise just as Rose was reaching school age and thirdly to have had an exceptionally nice LEA advisor, taught at home himself, who gave us the sound advice that we should do it in our own way and not with half an eye on what we thought schools did.

I certainly cannot end this piece without a big thank you to Dick Kitto without whom Education Otherwise might well not have got off the ground. I look back on those early get-togethers at Lower Shaw Farm with great affection. The atmosphere there was very energetic and purposeful (or was it that we were all so earnest and full of enthusiasm?) and I'm sure contributed much to the type of organisation EO grew to be.

My first encounter with Dick was when he was up to his elbows in bread dough looking rather bemused by all these odd families who'd turned up from every part of the country. I remember one meeting (maybe the first?) asking Dick if we could put all the people who had expressed interest in home education in touch with each other. I can't believe it was ten years ago and yet I can clearly remember Lillah learning to walk at Lower Shaw Farm. It was a wonderful feeling to know that there were other people scattered about the British Isles whose children were also not at school.

About a year after those first meetings we met Dick at Brian and Sarah Guthrie's house in London, full of a scheme to publicize Education Otherwise on the Open Door programme. James and I recklessly agreed that our cottage in Suffolk could be one of the locations and for two snowy days in February we were inundated with camera crews and people being filmed. Then followed the extensive cutting which seemed to be the key to the whole exercise and the eventual great night when we were to see ourselves on the screen. We still laugh at some of the really corny lines but they did really come from the heart. At that time we did feel like pioneers. Over the years we appeared in several newspaper and magazine articles and sometimes on radio and television again but there was nothing to compare with the commitment of producing and writing your own programme.

I shall always feel grateful to the people who paved the way for us too by showing that home education could work - people like the Bryans, the Lydiatts and the Theobalds, Nigel and Serena Swanton(?), Peter Jones, Mick and Jenny White and the Harrisons to name those I can recall at this minute. We are still in close touch with the Coxes, the Pyes and the Guthries from those early days and their children are still all at home but it would be interesting to know what became of other early de-schoolers. I know that from a local group we had in Suffolk at least four families sent their children to Waldorf schools in the end after varying periods of home education.

When I look back to the concerns of those early meetings I think that Education Otherwise has managed to retain many of the qualities that seemed important to those involved at the time. The very important theme of our ability to give mutual help, not to tell people what to

do but to make information available has remained as a foundation. This is reflected in the idea of a core group, of people snaring responsibility and in the changing editorship of the newsletter. We always envisaged as much decentralisation as possible taking place and the idea of local groups seems to work well. The contact list is wonderful. We never imagined the dimensions to which it would grow.. It can be used when choosing names for a new baby, for tracing people you have lost touch with and for making new friends as we did on holidays in Scotland, Wales and Shropshire. I'm sure our organisation is unique in its combination of 'laid-backness' and efficiency. There are people working away at every level - dealing directly with people who have problems and want help, promoting local group activities, organising conferences or meetings, being interviewed or writing about their experiences, telling friends and relations about the legality of home education, editing the newsletter, sitting on sub groups etc etc.. as well as in many cases taking responsibility for their children's education and probably trying to earn their living or bake their own bread as well.

Since we have not been able to get to many gatherings in the last few years my main guide to the state of EO has been the newsletters. Over the years there have been various crises but it seems to me that we have usually been able to solve them in the right spirit - something to do with having taken responsibility in one area of our lives and being determined not to be taken over again by experts or bureaucrats or professionals. I am always reassured when we encounter people saying EO should do this and should do that, that the criticism dies away again when it becomes clear that EO cannot be pinned down in such a fashion. It's great strength is in the people who make it up and who each feel they have an important part to play.

Tenth Anniversary addition to the Guthrie family - a bonny baby daughter born 10th November. Congratulations to them all with love.



EDUCATING ARCHIE BY SEG

It's Christmas Eve & Mrs G is reminiscing:



..how FRUITFUL, looking back .. oh hard times, yes of course. But...



somehow, Archie & I have always.. working TOGETHER..



When I THINK - Lower Shaw Farm! Dick KITTO, now there's a name to conjure with..



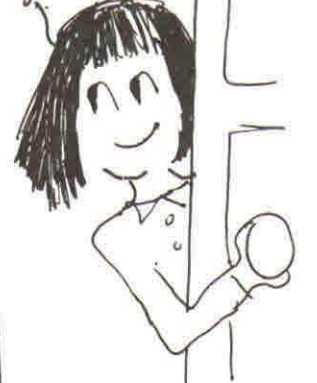
Alan PYE, the SWEETMANS, Iris Harrison.. Stan Windass




& there's my own personal GROWTH.. to think how TIMID I used to be in face of authority till that self-assertion course...



relax, Mum, it's only Father Christmas with the new GCSE syllabus



Hello my name is Emma. 

17 South View Road,
Rettendon Common,
Chelmsford,
Essex CM3 8DX

Hello my name is Emma. I am interested in butterflies, moths, wildflowers and wild animals and caterpillars. I am 8 years old and don't go to school and I would like a pen friend.

love from Emma

Marc Cottee
17 South View Road,
Rettendon Common,
Chelmsford,
Essex CM3 8DX

Hello my name is Marc and I am looking for a Pen Pal. I am ten years old and don't go to school.

p.s. I am very fond of Birds

2 Cromwell Avenue,
Penywn,
Neath,
W.Glam

Dear Reader,

I would like some pen friends. I am 11½. I am interested in science fiction, computers, myths and legends, animals and lots of other things.

From
Ben Gilmore

50 Broad Park Road,
Coventry CV2 100

Dear EO,

My name is John. I am eleven years old and I have been learning at home for three and a half years. I would like a penfriend. If any boys about my age would like to write to me I would write back to them. I live on a canalboat. I like poetry and country music.

John Andrew

Pednandrea House,
Redruth,
Cornwall TR15 2ED

Dear Newsletter,

I would like a pen friend. I am seven and a half. I like games and snooker and I like making things out of wood and I like playing on my bike.

Thank you

Zac Stevens



BLACK FLAGS and BAKED LENTILS

By CHRISTOPHER R. SHUTE



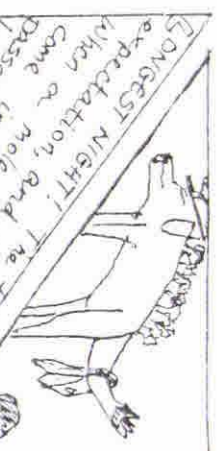
One Mona Lisa, they used to say, is sublime; ten would be unendurable. I went to Countesthorpe College wondering whether the same was true of Progressive State Schools. The Libertarian Education Conference was an interesting prospect in itself, of course, but seeing Countesthorpe was an undeniable bonus. I decided that on balance, the world would be a better place if all schools were built along these lines.

On the map it looks a bit like a mandala. Have you noticed that in the imagination of film-makers, artists and architects the Future tends to be curved? Countesthorpe is a small Universe away from the Victorian barrack-cum-prison which still inspires traditional school architecture. It's metaphor is the womb, round and warm with everything needful thoughtfully provided inside. One wonders why more schools were not built on the same lines. Any teacher knows that it is in the long, anonymous corridors which funnel the kids from one room to another that disorder begins and amplifies itself. At Countesthorpe there are no real corridors and even open space outside the classrooms is capable of being used for lingering, conversation and rest. I suspect that this integral view of the building, as a series of linked living areas disposed around a centre and sharing its comfortable curved shape contributes very positively to the atmosphere of the place.

The Conference promised much of interest. A rapid glance at the main meeting area revealed plenty of good subversive books, EO literature, posters in Catalan (Spanish miners are still, apparently, being jailed for their politics) and some inspiringly scurrilous broadsheets pouring scorn on our Pastors and Masters, Elders and Beters. I was delighted to see children, one sporting a Summerhill T-shirt, all behaving unexceptionably despite being surrounded by such precursors of chaos as Anarchists, Deschoolers, Free Schoolers, Pacifists, Vegans and me. Everyone was nice, even the hirsute and wild-eyed politicians. I looked forward to an interesting and inspiring conference.

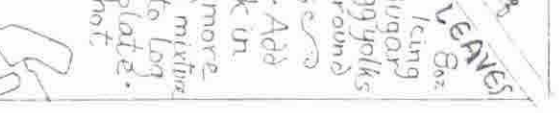
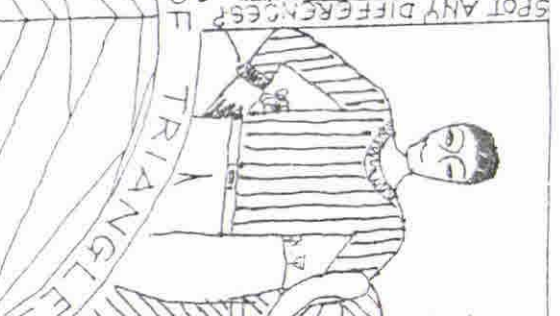
Negotiation was the order of the day. The areas of education which were to be studied, subjects of discussion, the size of the groups, everything was settled by mutual agreement before the sessions started. I imagine many people in the Real World Out There would see this as inefficient and time-consuming; however, it did ensure that most of us had the opportunity to discuss what was important to us.

There were EO parents there and the whole question of Home-Schooling was put under the spotlight. There was a lot of sympathy for it, and interest in the problems it caused. It would be wrong to suggest that any of those problems were solved by what was said in the workshops but I imagine that any EO parent would have been impressed by the commonsense and sympathy of many participants.



LONGEST NIGHT! The time when youngsters grow silly with their excitement. They remember the months still with their excitement. They remember the months still with their excitement. They remember the months still with their excitement.

It's Longest Night! The time when youngsters grow silly with their excitement. They remember the months still with their excitement. They remember the months still with their excitement.



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My name's more boys
The Christmas log
While my good name
comes from
Soul's
LDS
Horse
The
Horse
The
Horse

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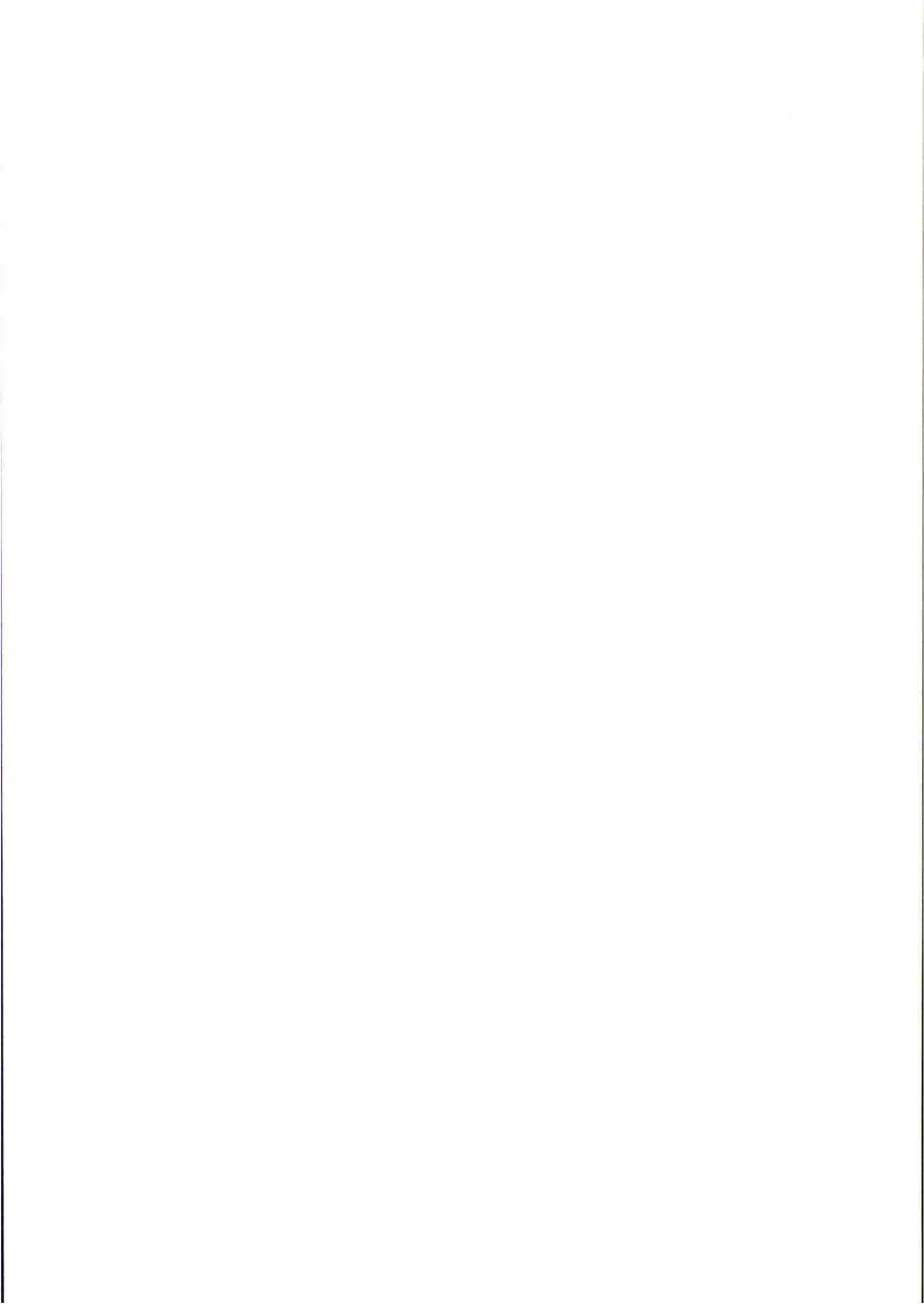
WINTER LOG
Melt 6oz of chocolate as described above. Dredge leaves (not holly) in choc and leave to dry on lightly greased tray. Peel off leaves carefully & display vein side up.

MARZIPAN YULE LOG DECORATED WITH CHOC LEAVES
Melt over a pan of hot water (NOT boiling). Pour over log. Use paint brush for bark effect. Save some marzipan and choc for cut branches.

HOW MANY CAN YOU FIND?
A world of wondrous to the over eager entrepreneurs: no greenery to be brought inside (since YMAS Eve & Not to be removed on Weds to Thurs).

STILL HELP!
Boz
1 cup sugar
2 egg yolks
1/2 oz ground almonds
Soft sugar. Add egg yolk. Work in almonds. Add more sugar & almonds if mixture too wet. Form paste into log shape. Boz chocolate.

SPOT ANY DIFFERENCES?
The time when youngsters grow silly with their excitement. They remember the months still with their excitement. They remember the months still with their excitement.



WAP!
 CACKLE!
 NOT IN FRONT OF THE ADULTS

Patient: Doctor! Doctor!
 I keep feeling people are ignoring me.

Doctors: Next patient please!

WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU DIAL 666?

AN UPSIDE DOWN POLICEMAN!

WHAT DO ELEPHANTS PLAY IN THE BACK OF A MINI?
 SOB!

FOR YOUR FREE MAGNIFYING GLASS see Father X ...

SOLVING the MYSTERY of FATHER X
 a piece of advice to budding detectives so sh...

Tie a piece of string to your big toe & attach it to your stocking then...

YOU'LL KNOW ALL ABOUT IT!

I'm in business!
 What's your business?
 Mushroom Grower.
 Oh yes! How's business?
 Pretty Deadly

HERE'S A FUNNY GUESSING GAME!

I'm in business!
 What's it this time?
 I run a bakery.
 Well, how's business?
 Really crummy...
 GET THE IDEA?

Business? Bit on the small side!
 I'm an underbaker!

CALL MY BLUFF: WHICH? COULD BE THE MEANING OF ARRIS

A BUILDER'S TERM FOR A POINT THAT EVEN AN ARCHITECT CAN SEE, BY A WINDOW FRAME, OR A DOOR FRAME, BUT AN ARCHITECT CAN'T SEE THE POINT IN A FLOOR. EVEN A PLASTERER CAN SEE THAT POINT!

OR IS IT A TAILOR'S TERM FOR A FINE TWEED WOVEN IN THE OUTER EBKIDASE AND SOLD IN LONDON?

A BRAND of sausages that may well sizzle out due to the popular spread of vegetarianism?

OR IS IT THE COMMON NAME FOR A TYPE OF GRASS GROWN ON SAND DUNES TO HELP STOP THE SAND FROM BLOWING AWAY. THE ROOT IS THOUGHT TO HAVE MEDICINAL PROPERTIES?

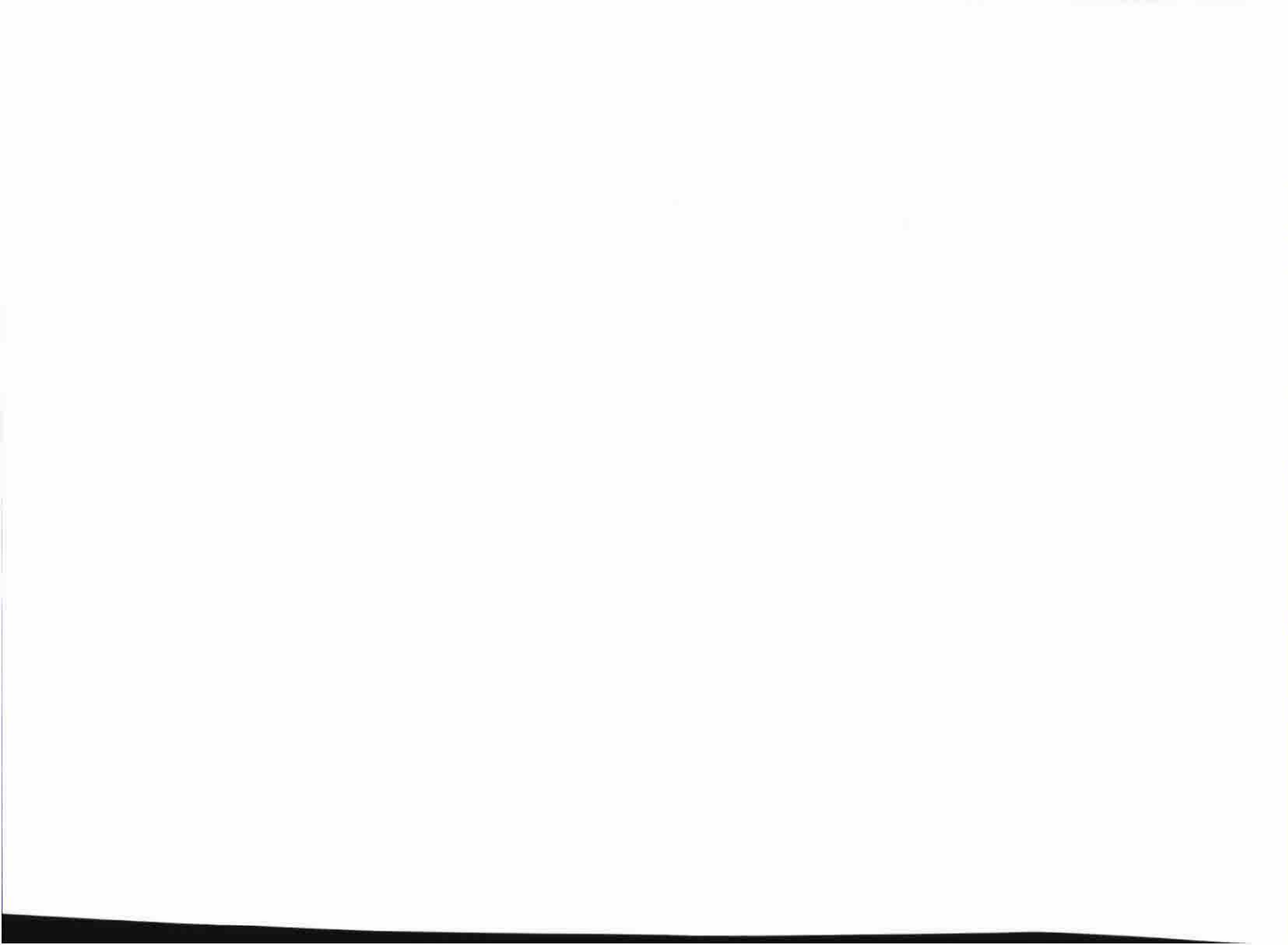
OR IS IT THE NAME GIVEN TO ORNATE TAPESTRIES OR HANGING SCREEN FROM THE FAMOUS FRENCH TOWN ARRIS?

An old fashioned term the queen uses when she knights somebody. She touches each shoulder with the blade of a sword, and then says: "Arris, Sir Crankers?"

ARRIS SAUSAGES

OR IS IT

One thanks are due to our sponsor for this special Christmas issue. Absolutely for the jokes and laughs. (I wish you a few) my wife's inspiration, you and talented children and (I wish) the day. We acknowledge the people who are making this the exceptionally great thing. Please bring this to the attention of the following people. We are grateful to you for your contribution.

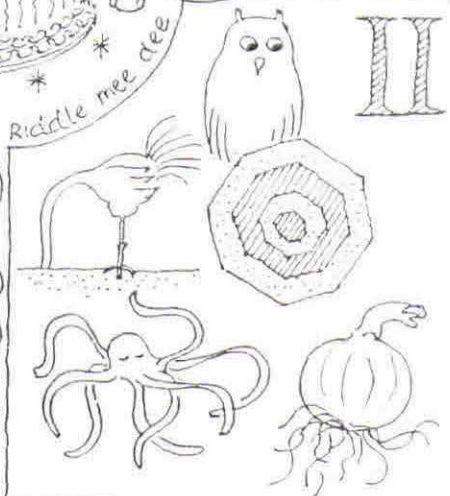




If 'is' had one
it would belong
to him, but it
'asn't! So there



Riddle mee dee



Answers Will Be Published Next Year!
send them in to the next ed.

III

The enormous kind man
With ears as large
as my frying pan,
Who gave the Queen a frightening
dream.

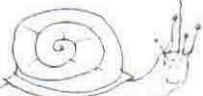
Now on page 149, on the 27th line
Someone went as white as a sheet.
Well, we hope she's feeling better
Because what you want is her
very first letter!

Draw a grid of IV
5 squares high

by 3 squares wide.

Colour in squares

A₁, A₂, A₃, B₁, C₁, C₂, C₃, D₁,

E₁, E₂ & E₃ but 
not E₁₀₂ or E₁₀₃!

RIDDLE TEE HEE, RIDDLE THE HEE. THE WORD IS HERE ON TOP OF ME.



I HAVE NOT TAUGHT MY CHILDREN TO READ

I have followed John Holt's beliefs and allowed my children to learn to read when they were ready to. They have learnt with conviction and energy when the need was there and then have hardly read a word for months.

Arne was beginning to read at 4 and learnt regardless of school - he hated the reading scheme.

All four have learnt very differently at different ages and speeds, beginning between 4 and 12. They have learnt without reading schemes or work cards, using their skills for widely different reasons. They have not had to put up with being branded either fast learner or slow - I know the problems, my spelling was appalling into my teens and I did not learn to write legibly until I was 20.

How 'easy' a book is, or the quality of its pictures seem often to have little relevance. If the book interests the person wanting to read it they will struggle to manage something even if it is the title or the contents.

The thing which seems most important is doing what the person who is learning is most interested in at the time and applying whatever you think necessary to solving that problem or need. Often the hardest bit is practise or repetition. We know 'Little Grey Rabbits Party' and 'Hagar the Horrible' off by heart still! Tapes are sometimes useful, either home made or bought, but it was the cuddle that went with Hagar that seemed the magic ingredient.

Making sure that the particular book/scrap of paper/letter is not submerged in someone else's activities is something I have always found very difficult, but last year I was given a file as a diary and the youngest two children each have a section for their important things which is giving me a lovely record of theirs as well as my own.

Checking by reading aloud does not seem necessary - if something does not make sense and the reader needs to know they will back track or go forward to find a clue and if it still does not make sense they will ask - there is a lot of literature on reading aloud producing slow inefficient readers only capable of seeing one word at a time and having to verbalise. Writing produces a lot of reading aloud and bed time stories and breakfast time excerpts from letters and newspapers are for reading aloud for the purpose of sharing.

One person spent a car journey with a newly aquired book spelling out or describing what seemed like virtually every letter in the book, but by the end of the book virtually all the alphabet and quite a few words had been learnt.

The phone has taught numbers and the phone book the alphabet and indexing skills. One child learnt the names of the letters from a piano tutor. Kids Stuff for Free was a fantastic investment for one child. Another came on in leaps and bounds with Exchange and Mart. Monopoly, Cluedo and Hangman have all been loved. Hangman seems addictive when all you can manage to spell from memory is your own name.

Some of our family, and I am one, could be called chronically dyslexic. Please may I say I do agree with John Holt, it is a problem devised by the schools. It is very cruel to straight jacket people into learning such exciting skills by rote to keep up with the school timetable just because at the time the others are plodding along we find the mirror images and upside downs and the back to front words magic. One of us could write our names in Chinese before English, is this disabling or enabling.

Useful bibliography in moments of despair or as help with advisors:-

John Holt anything!

Herbert Kohl. Pub. Methuen. 'Reading, How To' and 'Writing, Maths and Games'. About school but recommended by John Holt.

Penguin have a leaflet and poster on the readability of their books by Clive Moon - free.

Reading Centre, University of Reading School of Education, London Road, Reading have a wide range of leaflets costing between 5p and 30p. They are school orientated and about TEACHING as opposed to learning but they helped me acquire a vocabulary to discuss what I felt about the learning process and quote authors I disagreed with!!

The Open University Publications are interesting if you want to go into the subject in depth.

Jean Lovius

From Valerie Gomon

For us this was a very gradual process, shape sorting and painting being the real beginnings, moving on to games and activity books such as 'Learn to Read' and 'Learn to Write' (around 60p) also Macdonald 3,4,5, - Ready to Read - these we worked on together, doing whatever Geoffrey chose. I also got the Humpty Dumpty Club (from Odhams Leisure Group, Rushden, Northants) but at £4.00 a month this was quite expensive - all the things could be home-made, but it was a useful time and energy saver. One useful activity was matching words - for this I made cards with a picture and the word, then made a separate card with the same word - an excellent book for ideas is 'Reading Through Play' by Carol Baker. I also made Montessori type velvet letters and numbers, used friezes and books with cassettes. Geoffrey now reads 'Read it Yourself' books in the Ladybird series and other easy readers we find in the library.

From Lesley Kilbride

Having taught children in a Montessori school when it came to teaching my own two at home I naturally started them off with the phonetic sounds using sandpaper and velour letters, tracing round the shape and repeating the sound. This was followed by a Moveable Alphabet, small plastic lower case letters (Merit) that we used to make words of phonetic objects and then picture cards with the written word. All went well and reading galloped ahead.

I then awaited the "explosion into writing". "The child that draws will write"? It seemed Esther needed to bridge the gap between writing patterns and writing words. We did it this way. Using small photographic pockets (from a looseleaf photograph album) with words on card written clearly in lower case letters inside, i.e. name, surname, names of the family, etc. she could either trace over the word with chinagraph pencils or clip pieces of thin typing paper onto the pocket with a paper clip and trace over the visible image with pencils or magic markers. This became a great game and the tracing of the letters was just a continuation of what she had learnt while tracing the sandpaper or velour letters, however, with one difference there was now a visual reward. If the chinagraph pencils were used directly onto the plastic they could be removed easily with a cloth. We enlarged on this idea later using a clip board to which were attached a page which might display geometric shapes or other writing readiness games. These we used to take out of Collins 'First Steps' books. By putting the page under semi-rigid plastic (we used a piece of indoor double glazing plastic) they could be used again and again.

When Amy reached this stage a couple of years later she showed very little interest in going through all the sandpaper letters (probably because she had heard it all with Esther before) so we used a book which used the same principle of clipping clear plastic over letters and tracing them with a magic marker or chinagraph pencil. This book was a great favourite and her writing developed into a very correctly formed hand. The book is 'Write First Time' by Bill Michael (Evans Bros.) and demonstrates clearly where each letter should be started and in what direction the pencil should go (with Esther I had covered this fully when demonstrating the sandpaper or velour letters).

We still use the tracing over technique occasionally and are adapting it for the step into joined up writing.

Useful Books:- The Montessori Method by Maria Montessori
Help Your Child to Read and Write and More. D. Mackay, J. Simo. Penguin.
Reading and Loving by Leila Berg - to be reviewed when I've got a copy.
Five to Eight by Dorothy Butler. The Bodley Head. " This practical book describes hundreds of books for reading to (and enjoying with) children aged 5-8. and includes a sensitive chapter on learning to read. A rich and joyful book. Recommended by Fiona Dix.

How different it all was from the horrific image of Anarchism which comes down to us from the history books. I was thrilled as a kid by the last stand of Peter the Painter in the house in Sydney Street but I always felt Anarchism was not a British way of carrying on. The Libertarian outlook on life was obviously a lot less subject to spontaneous detonation. In fact it was deeply reassuring. I had expected to find a fair few flinch-faced zealots; instead there were mostly professionals, aesthetes, gawky youths and parents who just wanted better things for their kids. I felt at home.

After lunch, an inspired miscellany of strictly vegetarian dishes, which I have no hesitation in saying I would eat every day if only I knew how to make them, I attended a seminar on Free Schools. There were other workshops but none attracted me as much as the chance to meet some folk from the real world of radical education. The people from White Lion and Kirkdale told us about their schools, showing that such places are far from Utopia but a great deal better than the State Sector. Pushed from pillar to post by the Authorities the Free Schools seemed to live on a permanent tightrope. White Lion had been displaced by ILEA so that repairs could be carried out on their building, repairs which were planned to take a few weeks and took in the end eighteen months. The suspicion that the Authorities do not like having to tolerate such places was reinforced by the fact that they insist on the names of White Lion pupils being on the register of the local 'proper' school even though they did not attend it. This maintains the fiction that White Lion is just a place for misfits. Kirkdale, too, was on the point of displacement. Their building had been reclaimed by the owners and they would have to disappear if they could not have an alternative by Christmas. Clearly educational pioneering is as hard on the adrenalin as it is on the pocket.

The group from Summerhill, of course, were on a slightly different plane. There were a couple of teachers and some kids, mainly boys, who would have given any traditional headmaster a coronary. Summerhill continues to exist under Neill's daughter, Zoe, and it seems to have maintained its essential challenge to the fundamental structure of State Schools. There is still self-government, though it has been a little diversified with sub-committees and arbitrators. The kids still learn by experience and live with their mistakes. Lessons are still optional and one of the teachers admitted that he teaches the children what they want to know, rather than what he thinks they ought to know. The kids answered questions with clarity and aplomb, proving that in spite of their laid-back appearance they were there for a serious purpose and were not afraid to express themselves. Unfortunately they were not a cross-section of the nation's youth since Summerhill is fee-paying and although still the cheapest in the land, it is beyond most ordinary folk's budget. Perhaps one day Local Authorities will be run by educators instead of bureaucrats and children will be able to go to places like Summerhill at public expense.

I left as the Gilded Youth prepared to dance the night away. I wish I liked discos but I really don't so I picked up my case, bulging with subversive pamphlets and crept back to my bolthole among the bourgeoisie. But I'll be back.

*This magazine is against authority.

*Schools and colleges use their authority to define, to grade and to discipline, in order to transform the learners into the sort of 'products' the state demands.

*In contrast 'Libertarian Education' sees education as liberation. The learner, young or old, is the best judge of what they should learn next. In our struggle to make sense out of life, the things we most need to learn are the things we most want to learn. The liberated learner controls the process - no longer the victim.

*We don't pretend to have all the answers. Lib Ed magazine is a forum for everyone who is interested in the liberation of learning.

LIB ED has been published on and off since the late sixties. The new serie , begun this year, has a glossy-mag format and a generally more polished presentation.

There are three issues a year for an annual subscription of £2 and back copies are available at 50p per copy.

The articles and features are well researched and informative. LIB ED concentrates on the school system rather than alternatives to school but this doesn't mean that it has no relevance to EO families. As can be seen, LIB ED and EO have much in common. If schools were more free, less authoritarian and more relaxed about themselves, then they would be less frightened of alternatives like EO and we would see fewer cases of harassment from LEAs. Perhaps.

ISSUE 1: The lead article is on the Ray Honeyford case and quotes some of his asinine views on race and 'working class culture'. For example - "Working class culture is about Bingo.... the football pools.... the tabloids...stories of broken marriages, unmarried mothers, hire purchase debts and evictions, big brother in prison and sister eloped with a black man." Honeyford's crudeness and contempt for his pupils and their families is shown in his own words and the article makes a good contrast with the type of thing the likes of The Daily Mail produce. This issue also features Countesthorpe College, one of the few state progressive schools and charts its progress from its early idealism and commitment to power-sharing to its present decline into a more authoritarian structure.

ISSUE 2: Several interesting articles in this issue including a factual and therefore powerful piece about corporal punishment which shows that a clear record of the facts obviates the need for much argument. There's also an ex-Countesthorpe student writing about her job as an apprentice mechanic for a bus company. The main feature is on the White Lion Free School and quotes the experiences of pupils, parents and workers.

ISSUE 3: Continuing the interest in progressive schools the main feature is on the famous Summerhill founded by A.S.Neill. There is a lot of in-put from the pupils and some cheerful drawings of the campus showing that the central aim of a free and happy learning environment has not changed. A critical look at Summerhill's administrative structure shows that A.S. Neill's benign dictatorship is being maintained by his successor - not much power-sharing here and the liberal attitudes obviously don't include the teachers who are poorly paid and have no job security.

TO SUBSCRIBE: send £2 (cheques payable to LIB ED) to:
LIBERTARIAN EDUCATION, THE COTTAGE, THE GREEN, LEIRE, LUTTERWORTH, LEICS
26

CHERITY LANIADO

1945 - 1986

Cherity died peacefully at home on October 10th after a year's struggle to overcome cancer. She was known to so many of us in EO as Norfolk's indefatigable and dedicated co-ordinator - a source of strength and intelligence for many people over the years. Cherity's first priority was the home education of her three children and this flowed over into an enormous commitment to developing education otherwise locally and nationally as a real possibility for all sorts of families. She likened herself to a terrier dog once who will 'worry' at something until she has mastered it. This tenacity of spirit enabled her to support and help a demanding teenager foster child for three years, as well as finding time to inspire and motivate a project very dear to her heart: PUMP FOR LIFE. This brings water bores to families in the third world and Cherity was able to make a link with a camp in Eritrea. She knew, before she died, that PUMP FOR LIFE would be able to meet specific needs that had arisen and the knowledge of this very positive development sustained her in her last months. But her friends will remember her for her two outstanding qualities. One was her unstinting readiness to be available for anyone who cared to call on her, to listen to them with warmth and encouragement. The other was the immense courage and positive spirit with which she faced an increasingly hard illness, wherein she learned to look on every single day as a bonus and to see her life with increasing clarity. Cherity has died but those qualities will go on affecting and remaining with those who knew her. She will be remembered with love and her work is a permanent ^{cornerstone} of education otherwise's development.

Our sympathy and thoughts go to Cherity's husband Farid and to their three children - Tamalaine, Corrisande and Nousheene.

Note: If you have a particular memory of Cherity that you would like to share please send it in for the next newsletter.

Wick Court, Nr. Bristol January 23-25th January

As no other venue had been found for the January gathering Wick Court was again booked. As it is in late January when it is likely to be bitterly cold it will probably be more of an indoor affair. We will again have a ceilidh on the Saturday evening, something much enjoyed at the AGM by children and adults alike and I also hope there will be story-telling, films and other activities for children. If anyone has any specific ideas or suggestions of things that it would be nice to do together do please be in touch.

Friday evening will be pot luck supper this time so please try and arrive by 6.30p.m. bearing a special dish to share. Also don't forget cakes for Saturday tea, top sheet or sleeping bag, toys, crayons, tapes, musical instruments, wellies, woolly hat, gloves, scarves and hotties.

I look forward to seeing you then if I can get out of our lane!

COST

<u>Full board</u>	both nights	Adult	£12	Child	£7
	per night		£ 6		£3.50
Children under five	£3 for both nights		£1.50	per night.	

Babies free.

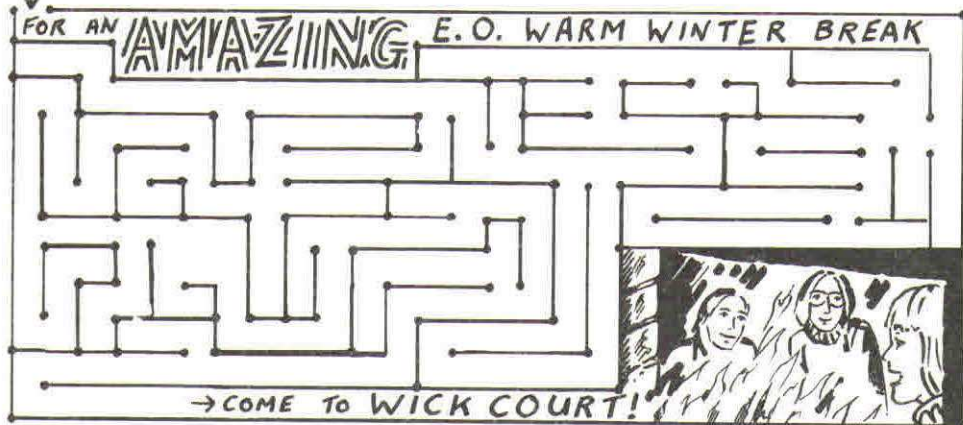
Families who find the cost financially prohibitive please pay 50% or as you feel able.

Camper Vans Adults same cost as residents. Children same cost as under-fives. If self-catering £2 per night.

Day Visitors Saturday is definitely the best day for socialising. Could you please bring a packed lunch. If you would like to stay for the ceilidh on the Saturday evening and have supper please indicate on the booking form. There will be a charge of £1 for all adult day visitors and for those wishing the supper there will be a further charge of £1 per adult and 50p per child. There will also be a charge of 50p per person for the ceilidh. PLEASE PAY ON THE DAY but send your booking form to the address below.

Residents send cheques (payable to Education Otherwise Association Ltd.) with booking form and SAE if you require a map to:-

Meg Roberton, The Old Thatched House, Midford Lane, Limpley Stoke, Bath, Avon BA3 6JP Tel:022 122 3266



BOOKING FORM

Name

Address

tel no.

RESIDENTS

No of nights Friday Saturday
No of adults No of children over 5 under 5
cot required willing to share room
Travelling by public transport and will require collection
(Please let me know nearer the time where and when)

DAY VISITORS

Saturday Sunday
Supper required on Saturday evening
No of adults no of children
CAMPER VAN self-catering

Provisional Agenda for Core Group Meeting

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Minutes of the last meeting
- 3 Reports of officers and groups

- a Membership Secretaries - Bruce and Christine Wallace
- b Enquiries Secretary - Janet Everdell
- c Co-ordinators' Secretary - Andy Anderson
- d Steering Committee - Joan Hoare, Janet Everdell, Alison Mafham
- e Press Secretary - Joseph O'Connor
- f Publication Secretary - Lesley Kilbride
- g Research Group - Anne Wade
- h Legal Group - Anne Wade
- i Treasurer - Alison Mafham

- 4 Rolling Fund - Bruce Wallace
- 5 School Phobia - Pat Knox
- 6 Later Years - Bruce Cox
- 7 Early Years - Sarah Guthrie
- 8 Digests of past NL's - Jennie White and Jean Lovius
- 9 Covenants - Alison Mafham
- 10 Silk-screening of T-shirts at EO meetings - Jean Lovius and Felix Polkowski
- 11 Boundaries between EO Association Ltd and the Independent Alternative Education (Otherwise) Resource Centre - Peter Edwards and all.
- 12 Possible letter to LEAs - Legal Group
- 13 Access to Personal Files Bill - Legal Group
- 14 Child Benefit for over 16's being educated at home - Lynette Cameron
- 15 GCSE - Bruce Cox
- 16 Conference on Children and their Rights - Anne Wade, Pat Knox, Lynette Cameron
- 17 Future Venues - Featherstone Castle and Lauriestan Hall - Jean Lovius and Christine Wallace
- 18 AOB
- 19 Votes of thanks

All members are welcome to attend. Please send any additional items to Joan Hoare, General Secretary.

CHRISTOPHER R. SHUTE

"hand me the hammer, Henry,
I've an.....

ICON TO CLAST!"



I have never left anyone in doubt about what I am against. My friends - I still have a few - know what it is dangerous to talk about when I am one of the company. I suppose you might call me an iconoclast without a delicate sense of the fine differences which some folk some folk see between one icon and another. To me, if a thing has been chuntering on for a century, resisting radical change, as the school industry has, and if it appears to do more harm than good then the best place for it is the scrapyard. It has plenty of usable spare parts which might help a youngster to find his way in life but they will be of no use unless he can get at them. For that, the system has to be pulled apart, deprived of its stifling coherence, its relentless preoccupation with predictability and assessment.

But am I in favour of anything, apart from bomb-throwing? Yes, I am for education, children, happiness, life and freedom, in no particular order. That is why I oppose compulsory schooling.

I honour the people in Education who want children to have a better life than their parents had. That is a noble wish. The ignoble course that education has taken comes from the stupidity or venality of the teaching profession; indeed, many teachers are the best of their generation, because, having learned a saleable skill they choose not to make good money from selling it, but rather to hand it on to others. Unfortunately they also have a need to be accepted as professionals. Educators have spent more than a century fighting for a place between the charmed parenthesis now occupied by doctors, lawyers, accountants and architects. To achieve that good end they have had to evolve an expertise, to dignify the drilling and jawing, the thwarting and manipulation which teaching boils down to, with the name and quality of a science. We laugh when the rat-catchers insist on being called 'rodent management consultants' yet we solemnly accept teaching as a profession (though we only pay decent wages to those within it who hardly ever practice in the classroom.) The Jews, I feel, had the right idea about teachers. Until the recent years, in the traditional communities of Europe, the 'melamed' or teacher was a drunken, dissolute scoundrel, fit only to take the odd few children whose fathers could not prepare them for their adult duty of reading the Law, and hammer literacy into them

with whatever blunt instrument lay to hand. Like teachers today, they were poorly paid and despised, but unlike their modern counterparts they did not clamour to be recognised as masters of a sacred mystery. In a literate society, as Jewry was, everyone could teach what needed to be known and most parents made it their duty to do so to their own children. Only the fringe families, with inadequate or disabled parents needed teachers and a man who had no practical trade and could only earn his keep by selling his scraps of knowledge was, rightly, classed with the beggars.

Good education cannot concern itself with programming or achieving a fixed goal. If you want to build a house, call in the architect and trust him with the plans. If you are ill, consult the doctor and let him use his skill to cure you. Both architecture and medicine are sciences which a person can learn and apply with reasonable certainty that they will achieve the effect he intends. Education is absolutely different.

If you want your child to grow up intelligent and resourceful you must abandon the idea that some professional can take him in hand and work on him in a special secret way and guarantee him advantages in his future life. Instead you must try, as far as possible, to find out what makes him happy and let him do it. You must accept cheerfully his going a way which is not yours, following a belief or interest which you reject. You must surround him with real love, not the cheap, dishonest masquerade which enables a person to say to his child 'I am going to hurt you, insult you, frustrate you for your own good because I know that if I don't something awful will happen to you later.' Unless that awful thing is certain death or injury you are lying to your child because you know nothing at all about your child's future. You haven't to live in it and you can't be responsible for it if it is bad. Only the child can.

This ought to be recognized as common sense, but unfortunately for the children it strikes at a fundamental tenet of our faith concerning our young, namely that they are incompetent, dangerous, skittish, unreliable or mentally retarded. Even if we decide we like them it is because of their naivete or cuteness, not their basic competence to learn and grow mature.

I suppose, in the end, I want to make the child the 'professional' in the process of education. He or she is capable of learning to speak one or more languages unaided before the age of five. Surely he can handle the rest without our constant interference. I am for things which allow a child to become more competent, I oppose anything aimed at making him more competent when he doesn't want or need to be. Teachers, tutors and the like are wrong educationally when they do not offer information to the curious but only a series of tasks and memorisations followed by testing. Education ought not to be assessed by what it makes the child do or say during its course, but by what he does after it for the rest of his life. I am only in favour of education which consistently produces happiness, competence, and sociability from youth until old age. The present system doesn't, so away with it!

Growing Without Schooling

An American Home-Schooling newsletter started by John Holt. Lots of peoples personal experiences, quotes from John Holt and book reviews.

A Selection Pushing - More or Less

.... it amuses me to attend a home-schooling meeting and find that except for a few crazies (mostly me) everybody is trying to outdo the schools at their own game, 'moulding minds' or stuffing them....
Mike Kern

.....at our Home-Schoolers picnic I was especially pleased to see a growing interest in the more relaxed approach to home-schooling. There were parents of fairly young children who were already noticing signs of tension and strain in their children. This they attributed to the teacher-type, school-type things they were subjecting their children to. It was obvious that these young parents want very much to believe in and trust their children in relation to learning, but it's still a foreign concept in our push, push, push society.....
Ruth McCutchen

Donna Richaux, editor of GWS, comments: 'John Holt used to predict that most parents who tried a very school-like approach at home would either relax, at least somewhat, or give up and put the kids in school. Certainly the bulk of the evidence we have seen at GWS has shown this to be true so far.

Jill Gillings has now taken over distribution of GWS to EO members and if any of you would like to subscribe, six issues per year, subscriptions are now due for 1987 - £10. Jill would also like to hear your views on the above quotes. Her address for letters and subscriptions is: Seacrest, Clay Head, Baldrine, Isle of Man. .

Dear Newsletter,

I can recommend 'MAGICAL CHILD' by J.C. Pearce, library reference 136.7 PEA. It is, from my point of view, written by a man who is very much in the same mould as J.Holt. As to putting his ideas into practice, the book re-enforces our own approach to our childrens education. I personally feel, after reading this book, and John Holt's works, that we would never have inflicted school on any of our children at all, never mind the short time that we did. The book penetratingly pricks at the truth that our 'civilised' society is increasingly not so, and in fact gives sound reasoned arguments why it is breaking down, as it must inevitably do so, if Pearce is correct in his hypothesis. It cannot have escaped anyones attention that 'things are getting worse' in almost all spheres of our society. 'Each generation produced under schooling proves more shocked, crippled, violent, aggressive, hostile, confused, defiant, despairing and the social body crumbles faster and faster. And increasingly, our reflexive, conditioned answer is to inflict the tragedy on the child sooner and sooner, in the hope that if we catch him/her early enough it will all work out.' I do not expect everyone to agree with Pearce, or with me, but feel that everyone EOing would benefit from reading it, if only to see the other persons point of view. Thank you Sue (newsletter 49) for bringing the book to our attention.

MJ. Adams, 14 The Grove, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 1RW

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF EDUCATION OTHERWISE ASSOCIATION LTD.

WICK COURT, Saturday, 27th September 1986 at 2.00 p.m.

Present:- Bruce Cox, Joan Hoare, Christine Wallace, Anne Wade, Rob Wade, Jennie White, Julie Lyons, Patricia Filardo, Miryam Bush, Barry Lovius, Thomas Kilbride, Lesley Kilbride, Elizabeth Hamphill, Valerie Common, June Grant, David Bettie, Robert Gillings, L.J. Chaundy, Liz Ramsey, Patricia Knox, Rena Laslett, Liz Aylett, Chris Traper, John Perry, Linda Perry, Jill Hornsby, Malcolm Hornsby, Nancy Skinner, Sally McCarthy, Peter Macarthy, Stephan Dave (non-member) Caroline Grant, Tony Hill, Jill O'Conner, Joseph O'Conner, Jean Lovius.

- 1) The following people were signed on as new members of Education Otherwise Association Ltd:- Christine Wallace, Lesley Kilbride, Robert Gillings, Barry Lovius, Elizabeth Hamphill, Tony Hill, Jill O'Conner, Patricia Knox, Thomas Kilbride. We then attained the necessary quorum.
- 2) After introducing ourselves apologies were received from:- Andy Anderson, Janet Everdell, Alvena Hillier, Angela Montfort-Pebb, Jean Shephard, Nadine Edwards.
- 3) The minutes of the last AGM, at Wick Court, Saturday 12th October 1985 at 2.00 p.m., were approved and signed.
- 4) The accounts were approved by the meeting. Alison also said that all officers and co-ordinators must send in written accounts of expenses by the 30th June each year. There was about £6,000 in the Charitable Trust Account. The subscription did not need to be raised.

5) Reports of Officers and Groups

a) Membership Secretary - Christine Wallace
Chris said that membership stood at 1720 members approximately. About 50 families or individuals a month were joining; the membership was now spread more evenly over the country, with less of a preponderance in the S.E. The numbers of publications in hand was satisfactory. Teach Your Own was now available at £3.85 to members. The workload was still manageable but could be split in the future.

Bob Gillings asked why people drop out of EO. Joe suggested it was because EO was no longer relevant to them or because they had not received a reminder for their annual subscription.

b) Enquiries Secretary - Janet Everdell
Enquiries for the last 12 months ending August 1986 totalled 1700. The new ansaphone system for enquiries is working well. The regional enquiries secretaries handling calls are:- Wales, Miryam Bush, North & Scotland - Mick & Jennie White, South West - Meg Robertson, East & West Midlands - Hazel Clawley and Andy Anderson, East Anglia - Sondié Cottee, London - Genevieve Bridgeman, South East - Jude Ashley Walker.

Janet had 2,500 each of new introductory literature and membership forms printed and sent copies to officers and co-ordinators. She had taken part in BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour in a 20 minute programme about EO. Listeners' enquiries totalled 80. EO received 150 enquiries from an article in 'Country Living'. The 'Family Circle' is due to have an article on school phobia in November. A new book entitled 'Sailing with Children' contains our address in its 'how to educate' section.

School phobia is the chief reason for enquiries, closely followed by dissatisfaction and disillusion.

c) Co-ordinators' Secretary - Andy Anderson

A new co-ordinator was needed for Cornwall. Joan Hoare agreed to write to Sylvia Roskilly, the resigning co-ordinator, to ask her to arrange with the Cornwall group for a new co-ordinator to be chosen.

d) Steering Committee - Joan Hoare, Alison Mafham and Janet Everdell
We had approved the money to hire the band for the barn dance at Wick Court. The money required by the Ferrys had gone up to £600 because of VAT which we had forgotten about.

e) Press Secretary - Joe O'Connor

Recent publicity includes; 'Country Life' article in July, BBC South documentary - possibly to be shown in October, 'Woman's Hour' programme with Janet Everdell and a primary school headmistress, 'Time Out' has EO in its education listing, TV South documentary on country dwelling EO families in the South, Sunday Telegraph article on 5th October about parents supplementing children's education - EO is seen as the extreme end of this spectrum, Sunday Express article by Lucy Tomkins, an EO member in Surrey writing on home education, ACE Bulletin articles by Julie and Toby Lyons on their conflict with Farnsley LEA over school uniform. In addition Patricia Knox has challenged the accepted views on school phobia by letters to the Guardian and the periodicals, 'Midwife', 'Health Visitor', and 'Community Nurse'. 'Libertarian Education' will also carry an article on EO in its Summer 1987 issue.

Press interest was of two kinds 1) human interest 2) lead/follow social trends e.g. where families co-operate to form their own school or educate otherwise.

Joe would like any families willing to be interviewed to contact him. He is acquiring more contacts with the press so he can get in touch with the press for publicity about any particular injustices.

f) Publications Secretary - Jean Shepherd

- 1) Sarah Guthrie had said that Early Years was nearing completion and would Bruce Wallace please let her know how many copies were needed as she was supposed to be dealing with her own printer.
- 2) We are printing 2000 copies of each newsletter at a cost of £950 per run.
- 3) We gratefully accepted Bledyn Jones' offer to print a special cover for our December issue, free of charge. The next editors will supply the artwork and liaise with them.
- 4) Jean offered her resignation as Publications Secretary which we accepted. She was willing to act unofficially until a successor was found. The meeting expressed its thanks to Jean for her hard work during her successful time as Publications Secretary.
- 5) We had editors for the NL for February and April 1987 but none for June 1987. More supplement editors were needed.
- 6) The new editors for the December '10th Anniversary' issue of the NL are David and Julia Cox. We approved the extra large size for this edition plus its extra cost.

g) Research Group - Anne Wade

The main research in hand is of course Pat Knox's work on school phobia. If anyone wants to research why people drop out of EO, would they please contact Anne.

h) Family Support Fund - Andy Jackson

The FSF published its guidelines in the April 1986 NL. It receives 10% of EO's income from membership fees for the fund. For the foreseeable future the fund will be unlikely to be able to pay legal fees and expenses. It should be seen as a second level of financial assistance after the statutory schemes such as legal aid have been approached. The fund has approved one

PLEASE NOTE

payment of £25 and another of £267.50. The trustees wished to stress that unless families were prepared to provide them with a certain amount of detail about their financial/legal affairs and proof of expenditure where applicable, they would be unable to help them.

Cherity Laniado has resigned as a trustee due to ill health. Anne Clarke volunteered to take her place. It was also said that Cherity would welcome letters from members telling her what is happening in EO.

i) Legal Group - Anne Wade

John and Linda Perry are still waiting to hear whether their case is to be accepted by the European Court. The Forsyths are waiting to hear whether the LEA's appeal against their successful appeal is to be allowed. Julie Homer is waiting for her appeal to be heard, following a conditional discharge under Section 37. Three families have lost cases which were in progress before they EO. Three families have had summonses withdrawn after negotiations with the LEA. Several families have been helped to avoid statements of special needs or encouraged to insist on home education despite a statement which recommended a special school. One family has managed to withdraw a child from a special school after a long battle - we look forward to their account of this in this newsletter.

The Legal Group was concerned at the number of families being bullied or misled by employees of several LEA's at all levels. However, families who courteously stand up for their rights often stop harassment quite quickly. Alan and Doreen Young countered pressure from Suffolk LEA with a letter from a good solicitor, plus their own efforts. They feel this pressure is a deliberate policy in their area and are willing to help any local members.

Angela Montfort-Reeb is resigning from the legal group and we thank her for her help. The legal group is to co-opt a new member to replace Angela.

Holding Fund
We decided to discuss this at the Core Group meeting on Sunday, 28th September 1986

k) Fund Raising Group - Joe O'Connor

Joe felt that fund raising should happen at a local level since local groups knew their own needs best.

6) Rotation of members of Core Group

We had already accepted Jean Shepherd's resignation. Other resigning officers were declared re-elected by the meeting. Christine Wallace and Julie Lyons were elected as new members of the Core Group.

Core Group Meeting of Education Otherwise Association Ltd.

Sunday 29th September 1986 Wick Court, Bristol at 9.30a.m.

Present:- Bruce Cox (Chair), Jean Houre (Gen. Sec.), Christine Wallace, Bruce Wallace, Anne Wade, Rob Wade, Jennie White, Julie Lyons, Patricia Filardo, Mirjam Bush, Barry Lovius, Thomas Kilbride, Lesley Kilbride, Elizabeth Hamhill, Valerie Common, June Grant, David Bettie, Robert Gillings, L.J. Chaundy, Liz Ramsay, Patricia Knox, Rena Laslett, Liz Aslett, Chris Graper, John Perry, Linda Perry, Jill Hornsby, Malcolm Hornsby, Manly Skinner, Sally McCarthy, Peter McCarthy, Caroline Grant, Tony Hill, Jill O'Connor, Joseph O'Connor, Jean Lovius, Felix Polkowski, Meg Robertson, Anne Clark, Peter Edwards, Lynette Cameron,

- 1) Apologies:- Andy Anderson, Janet Everdell, Alvena Hillier, Angela Montfort-Jebb, Jean Shephard, Nadine Edwards.
- 2) The minutes of the last meeting were accepted and signed.
- 3) Book on school phobia - Pat Knox

She has received many stories about school phobic children via the NL and read widely on the subject. Over one million children in the U.S.A. are on tranquillising drugs because of school problems - this is also happening widely in the U.K. A common attitude on the part of psychologists is that the mother of the school phobic child is being over-protective, with the negative aspects of school being ignored.

She thought it should be the legal duty of the LEA's to inform parents of their right to educate otherwise, if there are problems at school. At present the law does not provide for this. She has been in contact with her own M.P. about this. She had also sent out letters on school phobia to the House of Commons to various M.P.'s, half a dozen of whom had shown interest.

On 20th November the Childrens' Legal Centre is holding a conference which Anne Wade is attending. This is a useful forum for raising legal educational matters, including school phobia.

Pat's book is on a word processor and being corrected. She could approach Dick Kitto for advice about publishers. June Grant the Fawcett Society had an educational section which it might be useful to contact.

Finally it was noted that Cambridgeshire LEA does inform parents of their educational rights and we have had members through them.

4) Later Years - Bruce Cox

Bruce has written the book and it is on Bob Emmett's word processor, but needs correcting. Anne and Rob Wade volunteered to help with draft proof-reading and correcting. Felix Polkowski volunteered to then type in the corrections to the draft using his word processing facilities. He will also prepare a print out at no cost to EO and give us a price for printing. The book will have cartoons by Sarah Guthrie. Would anyone like to design a cover? Bruce will contact Ron about using Felix's word processor.

5) Covenants - Alison Mafham

She is still finding out about this and has ordered the book "Covenants- a practical guide to the tax advantages of giving" by Michael Norton.

6) Purchase of silk screen for T-shirts - Alison Mafham

The screen has been brought for £35 and will be kept at Jean Lovius' house in Liverpool. Jean and Felix will consult about producing T-shirts at EO meetings.

7) Boundaries between EO Association Ltd. and the Independent Alternative Education (Otherwise) Resource Centre

Andy Anderson had objected verbally to Joan Hoare about the minute 3(c) of the Core Group Meeting, Monday 26th May 1986. This minute states, "The Independent Resource Centre has received a gift of books from Leila Berg and receives books from publishers, either free or at reduced cost. These are held in trust for EO by the Andersons." We wished therefore to clarify further the boundaries between EO Association Ltd. and the Independent Resource Centre.

The books given to EO by Leila Berg belong to EO and this is not in dispute. Joe O'Connor proposed that we asked Leila Berg through Dick Kitto what her intentions were when she gave us the books. Bruce Wallace offered to ask Dick to contact Leila. June Grant will ask Andy how many Leila Berg books there are and of what kind, and also tell him that we are approaching Leila. We will discuss further at the next meeting what to do with the books, to make them more accessible.

Then after much discussion in a large meeting we decided to set up a small group to look into both the development of local resource centres and the boundaries between the Independent Resource Centre and EOA Ltd. Peter Edwards, Lynette Cameron, Bruce Wallace, Liz Aylett, June Grant and Tom Kilbride volunteered to be in this group. Peter Edwards will be the co-ordinator. They will report back to the next Core Group meeting in the new year.

8) Does EO as a group wish to make a concerted approach to LEA's: - Julie Lyons & Joan Hoare

We considered the suggestions for a possible letter to LEA's drafted by Julie. They were felt to be generally along the right lines. We discussed how such a letter might be used and it was decided that no such letter should be sent out over the heads of local EO members and co-ordinators. The Legal Group was asked to prepare a draft letter along the lines suggested by Julie. This should be publicised in the NL and comments invited from members.

9) Access to Personal Files - does EO wish to support this private member's bill? - Julie Lyons

We agreed to support this Bill in principle. We asked the Legal Committee to look at the Bill and give our detailed response to Maurice Frankel, M.P., in consultation with Lynette Cameron, Loretta Jones and Alan Young.

10) Child Benefit for over 16's being educated at home - Lynette Cameron

For EO'ers being educated at home before the age of 16 with LEA approval, there is now no problem in obtaining Child Benefit from 16-19 years, while they are still educated at home full-time (12 hours). The problem of obtaining Child Benefit still exists for children who choose to be educated at home after their 16th birthday or for those EO'ers who haven't chosen to obtain LEA approval. Lynette and her family intend to fight on and a local Tribunal was due to hear the cases of her 3 elder daughters on 30th October.
(See note at end of minutes *)

11) Contact List - Bruce Wallace

Bruce said that Bob Emmett didn't wish to change members' entries without their permission. We decided that there should be a short line printed at the bottom of each page of the Contact List, asking members to update their entries if they wished, plus a form at the back of the booklet to be filled in, giving the new details.

12) Education on a Human Scale - Schumacher Society - Joe O'Connor

Joe thought that any movement to make school education more humane should be supported. The Schumacher Society was holding a conference in April 1987 and would like a paper written on EO. Roland Maighan was writing this, as an individual member of EO. Bruce Cox will keep in contact with him over this. A group of parents for a workshop and a spokesperson for a forum were also required.

13) Future Venues

May - Unstone Grange - there was some doubt over this booking and Alison was asked to check this.

Featherstone Castle - Christine Wallace reported that this was a suitable place for EO. Either Featherstone Castle or Lauriestan Hall were possibilities for September and the AGM in 1987. Christine and Jean Lovius volunteered to sort out the venue. Wick Court was booked again for 23-25 January 1987.

14) Early Years - Sarah Guthrie

Joan Hoare has received a letter from Sarah asking for £50 for expenses for her work in writing Early Years. She had been putting in a great deal of time and effort re-writing Early Years. It was therefore proposed and agreed that we give Sarah £150 for completing Early Years and that we await her claim for expenses.

15) Clare Weber's letter from Eire

Joan Hoare read out Clare Weber's letter in which she spoke of the isolation felt by the scattered Irish members of EO, and of the financial difficulties they had in travelling to meet each other. It was proposed and agreed that £100 be given to the Irish group to subsidise a meeting. Some of the money could also be used on a telephone conference call if they wished.

16) AOBa) Publications Secretary

Lesley Kilbride volunteered to do the job for a year, with the support of Bruce and Christine Wallace, as she felt she didn't really know EO members or EO as an organisation. We agreed gladly to this.

b) Digests

A digest of all past NL's is required. Jennie White and Jean Lovius will collaborate over this.

c) GCSE

Do we need a discussion of the system and its implications for our teenagers? Bruce Cox volunteered to write to examining boards for further information, and will put a note in the next NL asking for information from members on GCSE. For Scotland, members would be advised to contact the Wallaces. Malcolm Hornsby thought a handout on GCSE was required.

d) January 1987 meeting at Wick

At Alison Mafham's request we agreed to pay £15 for a storyteller and £100 for a band for another barn dance. We also agreed that if a larger subsidy was needed for the meeting to make tasks easier, then it should be given. Liz Ramsay volunteered to do the bookings for the January meeting.

e) Conference on Children and their Rights, 20th November 1986

Arne Wade, Pat Knox and Lynette Cameron are to attend, expenses paid.

f) Votes of thanks

Bruce Cox was thanked by June Grant for organising the camp in the summer. It was wondered if we were interested in camps for outdoor pursuits. Cost was the problem, but underwriting of costs is available from EO.

Alison Mafham expressed EO's thanks to Christiar. Calvin, who gave us invaluable help and advice in setting up our business affairs.

We all gave our thanks to Meg Robertson in both organising and catering for the weekend at Wick.

The meeting was closed.

* CHILD BENEFIT - The appeal at the local tribunal was unfortunately lost.



TRUSTING IN THE CONTINUUM - A reevaluation by Dyana Hart

The article entitled ALTRUISM AND ANARCHY in the October newsletter prompted me to reexamine my own experience of the Continuum Trust, and the reality of my own being and life in relation to the concepts of altruism and anarchy.

As I think and feel and try to translate these processes into scratches on paper I feel sad. The task brings home to me - yet again - the huge gulf between vision and reality. Of course, the whole point - or almost the whole point - of my experience in Wales was to help me towards a reconciliation of the pairs of opposites.

I arrived in the valley in Wolfscastle, Pembrokeshire, at the Winter Solstice 1985, with my two children and what I kidded myself was an Open Mind. I had problems with a 'stuck' relationship, I wanted to discover new ways of being and doing based on what was really real, and I needed to shed layers of shit accumulated over four decades. I wanted to relate with honesty and immediacy to Candida, her child and to Terry who had started the Continuum Trust. When this didn't happen straight away I was frustrated, impatient and angry. I had a kind of vision of something I called 'creative conflict' - reaching harmony through conflict and confronting issues head on. That didn't happen overnight either. There was plenty of conflict and very little creativity. The Judge in me put a negative label on this and of course the end result was a blocking of conflict, creativity and practically everything else!

My impatience and perhaps cowardice made me leave before anything constructive could occur for me or my children there. I think one factor was a fear of my children becoming less dependent on me and of me becoming less dependent on them! To undo all the negativity, to even begin to be ready to try and live in a more real way, would have taken months, maybe years. My conditioned desire to analyse understand (and thereby control?) made me feel frustrated at my inability to understand Terry, his philosophy and behaviour. However, the tiny core of me, which knows, at bone marrow rather than brain cell level, making intellectual 'understanding' redundant, has survived all the conditioning and is stronger today.

True enough, there were no rules of leadership or organisation in the Welsh valley, nor any suggestion about what should take their place. Yet why should there be? Surely anarchy allows for each person to find his/her own inner rhythm/rule, without imposition from an external source. Isn't it our conditioning, our loss of our own true rhythms, that make us look outside ourselves, to other human beings who are no more together, wise, experience or good than we are? (Most of us are separated from our inner rhythms as we are snatched from our mothers' bellies and an alien feeding routine imposed upon us. So our rhythms, which develop from the synchrony with our mothers' rhythms - heartbeat, peristalsis, breathing and so on - are lost and our most intimate relationships are a search, not for the lost mother but for the lost rhythm.) But I digress.... True enough the Continuum Trust deed does not command 'Thou shalt not chop down the trees nor concrete the valley over'. What it does do is allow for the possibility that some wounded, damaged soul might want to do just that, but at the same time it trusts in the basic goodness of people, which all our bye-laws, regulations and rules fail to do. The people I met, who came to visit the

valley, had in one way or another quite rigid ideas of the type of community they wanted. A potential situation in which noone would control anyone else freaked them out. It freaked me out too but it felt important to experience it. But when it came to the crunch I didn't have the courage or the faith.

Courage and faith, however, grow the more we accept what is there inside us now instead of trying to change or deny it by focussing on how we want to be. How much insecurity, how much need, is real and primal? And how much is acquired, and even embraced, because it is easier to stay with our neurotic needs than it is to be a Warrior (in the Buddhist sense) and respond to the here and now. Responsibility = ability to respond. To do this we must let go of our thoughts about past experience and allow ourselves to be in the present. Each person will eventually find his/her own way of being fully present and alive in each moment, his/her own way of expressing the life force and letting the life force flow through him/her.

The relevance of the above to education is, I feel, that we must allow our children to learn through their own experiences and to discover/hold onto their own truth. How much of what passes for education in establishments today is learning to experience the world in someone else's way, so that one mistrusts and devalues one's own experiences and doubts one's truths. Thus, we have separation and destruction on a microcosmic and macrocosmic scale - for who, being wholly true and truly whole, would seek to hurt, destroy or envy another creature?

Mutual recognition of wholeness and worthiness goes hand in hand with mutual responsibility. Anarchy can only be creative if each person is responsible for who he/she is and what he/she does. And a person can only be truly responsible within anarchy. No other socio-political system allows for this. That is where the continuum comes in (my own interpretation of the word - I don't see J.L. or anyone else as having the monopoly.) The anarchic situation would have to exist long enough for people to shake off their inherited habit of manipulating and being manipulated and rediscover their true heritage and freedom.

All this brings me to a pondering of what Altruism is. I don't feel at ease with words that end in 'ism'. I don't feel at ease with words, full stop. But words ending with 'ism' make me suspect attempts at separation and control of one person or group by another. The word 'altruism' is derived from a Latin root and the Romans had a nifty line in subjugation and exploitation, even if they did 'improve' our sanitation, transport and architecture. Concern for others (the generally accepted definition) can easily mask a martyr-like and neurotic denial of self, or, at the other extreme, an equally neurotic need for power gained from the continuing dependency of others. The Welfare State is held together by the needs of some to be dependent and the needs of others to be depended upon, both groups underachieving and expressing no more than half their full nature and potential.

I'm not stating hard facts in this article, nor am I expounding a theory or credo. What I'm trying to do is feel my way towards a way of acting out of an awareness of what is happening in and to and around me at any given moment. (e.g, when I am with Don I'm relating

to him and not to my father who made me angry thirty years ago. And when one of the children shows me something, I look at it with my full attention, not with my mind divided up between the gas bill, what Don said to me yesterday, what I'm going to say to the bank manager and what I should have said to my father thirty years ago.)

I cannot be aware of another person's reality. But, paradoxically, by being fully aware and mindful of my own reality I can be more responsive to the reality of others. So I will no longer be a distorting and distorted mirror of your neurotic needs, fantasies, fears and misconceptions (and you of mine), but a friend whose authenticity and openness is mutually freeing. (The word 'friend' is Germanic in origin and it has links with the words for peace, freedom and joy.)

Twenty four hours later.

I abandoned this article yesterday because I couldn't think of the word for my feeling of what needs to exist side by side with anarchy to make it work. Now I know what the word was/is. It sums up all my feelings about being and responding, allowing and freeing. It is the essence of the leap in the dark that allows one person to relinquish his/her power and their ego, so as to fully meet another person and allow that person to be in his/her own way. (And, incidentally, to create a greater reservoir of power in the sense of empowerment and enhancement of both people's vitality.) This leap is an act of faith which someone must undertake if there ever is to be an end to suspicion, envy, greed, jealousy, possessiveness, manipulation, blame and guilt. The word is not altruism or anything else that ends in 'ism'. The word is LOVE.

Dyana Hart, The Capricorn Trust, 11a Bridge Avenue, London W6 9JA
Tel 01 741 3365

INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTRE

Tel: 0270 664060

Andy and Diane Anderson, 95 Derrington Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 7JA

An information/order form list is available. The list contains used and recommended books and materials and can be used as a guide to assist those seeking suitable educational material for children of all ages.

Members are offered the use of the Resource Centre - If anyone has any queries or problems with regard to what educational material etc. is available please do not hesitate to contact us at any time, either by phone, letter or a visit. What we don't know we will try to find out. Please feel free to use us.

As we get no funding from any source would you please ALWAYS include SAE for reply.

When recommending anything please give as much information as possible and when recommending a book etc., please give title, author, publisher and price if known and a rough idea of the age group it would be useful for.

NOTICES

The FEBRUARY SUPPLEMENT will be on 'Special Needs'. Anyone wishing to contribute please contact: Sylvia Jeffs, 16 St. Bernards Road, Solihull B92 7BB Tel: 021 706 6460

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT - to Stephanie Fatcher and Peter Darling a daughter, Rosie born Monday 27th October, a sister for Michael.
CONGRATULATIONS

Does anyone have space for a caravan where I could live with my son (5), near other EO families. If so please contact Poppy Green, 42 St. Marks Road, London W1D 6NR

Would anyone like to sell educational equipment, books etc for five year old onwards? If so please write to Verity Sykes-Davies, Killens, Great Orme, Llandudno, Gwynedd

Anyone interested in attempting to publish a book of short stories by EOers? One publisher is looking for original stories for 8-12 year olds - but any age welcome. One idea was if we get a book published the money would go to EO. What do you think? Send stories and suggestions to: Ninya Laslett, 42 Southend Road, East Ham, London E6 2AA Tel: 01 - 552 3297

The treasurer is grateful to a Milton Keynes member for pointing out a mistake in the analysis of expenditure in the last balance sheet (See NL no 48 page 42) The total cost (less travelling expenses) of the January '86 Core Group weekend was not £600 as recorded but £622.59. The £22.59 difference had been accidentally entered as Membership Secretary's expenses. Therefore the same balance sheet ought to have shown a total of Officers' expenses as £965.39 instead of £987.98

SOUTH YORKSHIRE CO-ORDINATOR - Joan Hoare has resigned from this post and Pip and John Rupik have agreed to take over. Their address is: 17 Westmorland Street, Balby, Doncaster, S. Yorkshire, Tel: 0302 711225

FUTURE VENUES FOR EO WEEKENDS - These weekends are both a social gathering and business meetings. All are welcome. They are at: Wick Court, Nr. Bristol - 23rd - 25th January 1987
Unstone Grange, Sheffield - Late Spring Bank Holiday Weekend
May 22nd - 25th 1987

HAMSTERS - As a result of home biology we now have ten beautiful and tame young hamsters. If there is an EO family who would like to give a good home to one please phone Helen - 01 341 0751

LEARNING IN SMALL GROUPS FOR JUNIOR AGE CHILDREN - Would you like your child to meet others and learn basic 3Rs for a few hours a week in a friendly and comfortable home atmosphere? If you would and you live within reach of London N.8. please phone Genevieve Bridgeman 01 341 0751

WANTED - a family to buy a spacious flat (3-4 bedrooms) in a large Georgian house in Shropshire, alongside four other families including four children learning at home. Communal ownership of nine acres with individual organic gardens. Ring Nancy Stewart and John Hargreaves on Market Drayton 4346 for further details.

-----and now NEWS from the REGIONS-----

NORTH LONDON - London North has a new and enthusiastic co-ordinator. Jeffrey Benge, qualified social worker and father of two is resident in the borough of Haringey. He lives at 17 Nelson Mandela Close, Coppetts Road, London N.10 Tel: 01 883 7906. He has moved since the printing of the 1986 contact list so please note his new address and phone number. Jeffrey is particularly interested in hearing from any families with experience of dealing with North London LEAs other than Haringey.

WEST MIDLANDS CHRISTMAS PARTY - All day December 13th at 16 St. Bernards Road, Solihull, (N.B. our day doesn't start until about 10.30am!) Bring scissors, pinnies etc for craftwork in the morning - last year we made crackers - and food to share for party tea also your lunch if you come in the morning.

ESSEX - We have recently said goodbye to Melanie and Steve Nield who have now gone to live in Australia. We have received several letters and they are busy exploring their new surroundings - we wish them much happiness in their new home. Recently a couple of 'old' EO families have renewed their membership and contact with the group. It has been nice renewing friendships and catching up on news especially as so many of the 'original' Essex members are moving or have decided to send their children to school. Incidentally congratulations to Paul Borman for doing so well in his 'O' levels. This month has also been a busy time for talk and exhibition preparations. The Green Party near Romford recently asked us along to give a talk about EO and asked if several members could go along as they were interested to hear a cross section of ideas and experiences. I mentioned this to several members but as Veronica Gibbs and I set off we did not know how many other EO members would turn out. As it happens we were amazed, for almost half those attending the meeting were past/present members of EO! We never did get time to find out if they had come as Green Party members or had heard about the EO talk but it was certainly nice to see so many supporters and it proved an extremely interesting evening. We have also been invited to take part in an 'Alternatives Exhibition', following an article in Resurgence by Bruce Cox. After discussions with the organisers we have been allocated a large corner area so that we can organise some activities for children (our own and visiting) - we felt this might prove a greater attraction than a basic stand with booklets

and EO literature. We have sorted out lots of photographs, taken at EO meetings and will be displaying these and one of our members has offered to have some large publicity signs made up for us. We hope we might be able to interest one or two members or at least to spread a little more public awareness about EO. Meanwhile the group continues to meet each three weeks. We have mostly been meeting at the Pitman room where we have been involved in history and castles. We also visited the castle at Stanstead Mountfitchet and learnt a fellow EO member had visited not long ago ... We shall be having our usual Christmas party - though we haven't got Melanie this year to organise any games! Does anyone else have any party tricks up their sleeves??! Sandie Cottee Wickford (0268) 733259

SHROPSHIRE - In September a puppet workshop was held at Don and Mandy Patters' home. Under the inspiring leadership of Juliet Brog, chief puppet designer and creator for her husband's puppet theatre, the children were able to make an entire cast of enormous puppets which later appeared in their own production set in a ready made garden theatre. Following this hugely successful day Juliet has offered to do a dance/drama day in the winter. It should be good!

BUCKS (south) - We'll be having a Christmas get-together on Sunday December 14th from 2.30pm. Please bring something for tea. The venue will probably be Haddenham but ring Haddenham 290773 to make sure. We particularly hope some of the new members whom we haven't yet met will come along and perhaps people from neighbouring regions. Ideas already noted for next year include a visit to a blacksmith and to Cogges Farm Museum at Witney. If anyone would like to offer their house for a get-together or arrange a visit or other outdoor activity it would be greatly appreciated. Please get in touch with me - Julie Webb

NORFOLK - At the end of August the Norwich EO group organised a camping week at the beautiful 'How Hill Environmental Centre' right at the edge of the Norfolk Broads. We read the notice in the newsletter and decided to go along and meet some new EO people. I was a bit pessimistic as I had never camped with the children before (let alone a three month old baby) but it was our only chance of a holiday and it sounded fun. It was a long drive for us but we finally arrived late on Friday and got the tent up in semi-darkness. The next two days it rained continuously but it was great. We marched backwards and forwards across the field to the tipi - what an incredible experience - I had never seen a real tipi, let alone sat huddled inside, around a fire, listening to an Indian story! Finally the rain did stop and we went on walks around the water gardens and a nature trail, seeing a rare butterfly and a tree that 'breathes' through 'knees' (little root-like stumps that extend some distance around the tree. The children performed a play, rode on bikes and played on some swing boats that the travelling families brought. We had a camp fire and sang and talked - a damp but happy camp, one I wouldn't have missed.

For all those eager to share in the delights of How Hill and well organised enough to want to put a date in next year's diary we've booked the week of Wednesday 26th August - Wednesday 2nd September for another camping holiday. Anne Clark, 33 Orchard Street, Norwich

EDUCATION THROUGH THE PRESS

Edited by Carol Dewar contributions from Sarah Guthrie and Ros Normandale.

G.C.S.E. Guide - At last, a simple easy to understand general guide to the G.C.S.E. that goes far beyond the government's own leaflets. Heinemann have just published 'All About G.C.S.E.' (£3.95) by a team of authors covering every aspect of the exam and answering questions on the trickier features such as differentiation and how it works and what are the disadvantages of the National Criteria? For information contact Heinemann Educational Books, 22 Belford Sq., London WC1C 3BH (Telegraph 29/9/86)

G.C.S.E. Craft Syllabus worries industrialists. - Teachers and industrialists have reacted with outrage to hints by a senior government schools inspector that traditional teaching of woodwork and metalwork will be abandoned because of the introduction of new examinations Until now skill-based O levels in engineering workshops theory and practice have been widely available. Teaching is likely to become more design orientated and it is feared young people will no longer get a basic knowledge of tools, materials and techniques. (Telegraph 8/9/86)

Abroad - French Head Teachers Get More Say - While the British government is gradually centralising the education system by assuming an increasing number of powers from local authorities and universities, France is rapidly decentralising its system ... Head teachers will in future have far more say in how their schools will be run ... That is not all. Rene Monory, Education Minister, is unlikely to endear himself to his British counterpart, Mr Baker, by having set aside a cool 860 million francs (more than £86 million) to improve teachers' pay and conditions in the next year's budget ... "You are moulding citizens of the third millenium and your responsibilities as far as this nation is concerned are immense". M.Monory declared. "The importance of your role also gives you rights."

French declare war on school hooligans - More than 44,000 special supervisors are to keep an eye - and the odd heavy arm - on teenagers in France's 7,500 secondary schools and further education colleges to curb a wave of violence, vandalism and drug taking ... the Minister for schools has declared war on the 'terrorism' where hooligans smash teachers' cars, break into fellow pupils' lockers or hold classmates to ransom ... A total of 25 million francs has been added (£2.67 million) to the education budget to help meet the cost of the campaign. (Telegraph 26/8/86)

Today's enemy of promise - Paris has more bookshops to the square kilo metre than any capital city I have seen ... France remains a highly literate, articulate and intellectual nation ... So it was all the more astonishing to learn that 20% of youngsters moving from primary to secondary schools in this country cannot read and that more than half fail to read fluently ... The French shake their heads and suggest lessons at primary schools should be stricter, that children should be taught to read for at least one more year ... and that teachers should be better trained to teach reading and writing ... France is by no means alone in facing illiteracy and innumeracy ... Look at youngsters on any bus or train these days. What are they up to? Reading? Far from it. They are listening to Walkmans. Sit close, and all you can hear is the beat pounding away. Could you hear some of the songs, you might be horrified. Often they

are simply gobbledegook, and many are obscene ... Television must share some of the blame. The little screen has for far too many replaced books altogether ... For the sake of the adults who will be running Europe in the year 2000 ought we not to ask our parents and our teachers to concentrate a little more on the three Rs? (Telegraph 15/9/86)

Village Schools Go it Alone - Village schools are mounting a campaign to stay open in the face of government calls to speed school closures ... A growing number of schools in rural areas have defied closure orders and kept their doors open to local children ... Faced with closure at least four village schools have opted to go 'independent' and continue to meet the needs of local families without the need for 'bussing' to larger town or neighbourhood schools. (Telgraph 8/8/86)

Education Ministry 'can't cope' - A shortage of staff and money is preventing the Department of Education and Science from monitoring the effects of its policies. A conservative member of the Commons Education Committee claimed ... 'the new Education Support Grants are not being tested for their effects because of lack of people. The DES does^{not} have time to monitor objectives and performance in schools and has not yet developed adequate measure of them, except exam performance' ... (Guardian 23/7/86)

'Switched off' pupils claim condemned as unhelpful - Head teachers have condemned as 'unhelpful' a claim by Mr. Baker, Education Secretary, that too many fourteen and fifteen year old pupils are bored and 'switched off' in school. Mr David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said yesterday, "The reason so many are bored is because the curriculum provided for non-academic children is wrong and needs to be radically changed. The implication of Mr. Baker's comment is that boredom is the result of inadequate teachers. That is categorically wrong. Until we feed children a much more relevant curriculum we shall never get over the problem ..." (Telegraph 25/8/86)

Pushy Parents - A warning from a Genius - Amy Wallace hopes her new book 'The Prodigy' will be a warning to the present generation of American professional parents with obsessive ambitions for their children. She has drawn upon the tragic life of child prodigy William Sidis whose feats outranked those of history's most renowned geniuses. Amy, herself an exceptionally gifted child, sees American mothers and fathers making the same blunders that William Sidis' parents made some ninety years ago in trying to create a genius from the cradle ... It was with disbelief that Amy stumbled across the Better Baby Institute which encourages parents to hold up flash cards of place names and historical facts for their infants five or six times a day instead of letting them play with toys. "The idea is to try and treat the baby's mind as a sponge. Yet by the age of five a lot of these children are having anxiety disorders and seeing psychiatrists because they feel so pressurised" "What puzzles me very much are the two sets of values - one where people want to admire heroes and be heroes themselves and the other where they want to tear them down because it makes them conscious of what they are not. Where those issues clash the child prodigy is the victim. (Standard 10/9/86)

Videos blamed for horror Essays - Children as young as eight are having their minds damaged by exposure to videos portraying brutal sex and violence a teachers' conference was told yesterday. Miss Sue McCaffrey, an English teacher from Thurrock, Essex, told delegates of the Professional Association of Teachers that many 11-14 year olds were now including in their essays 'horrific acts of people being maimed and killed and ghastly stories of victims being decapitated or mutilated'. She spoke of one eight year old who had video equipment in her bedroom and had watched horror films with her mother while they ate lunch ... Chorley primary teacher, John Rutherford, said it was impossible to teach young children who had been up late the night before watching TV or video films with their parents. 'Parents should consider in a responsible manner the kind of material they allow in the family home. They should be aware of the sort of films that poison young minds' ... A motion deploring 'the influence on children of newspapers, television and videos giving prominence to sex and violence' was approved unanimously. (Newcastle Chronicle 21/8/86)

Making Fun of Facts - When she couldn't find a magazine suitable for young children Michele Grinstead decided to produce one herself called 'Play and Learn' ... What 'Play and Learn' manages to do so successfully is combine fun and fact in an original way. On page three of the first issue is a picture of birds in their natural habitat and beneath it clear coloured drawings of the birds (an owl, a seagull, a blackbird and a duck). Younger children match the birds in the picture with the drawings while slightly older children can learn the spellings of the names and still older children can study the genetic groupings ... It is a monthly magazine priced at 95p. (Telegraph 9/9/86)

SOCIETY OF NATIVITISTS


Members may be interested to know that accurate Christmas material can be obtained from:- The Society of Nativitists, Wassail House, 64 Severn Road, Cardiff CF1 9EA Tel: 0222 41120. They publish a journal which is taken by the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh universities as well as their more academic fact sheets. They also have resource lists of books/project material mainly for under 11s. Members of EO may subscribe to the journal - £2 per annum for three issues. Enquire about resource lists and fact sheet index.

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS OFFER!

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WITH THE TENTH
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EOTS - FIELD HOUSE - THRANDSFORD
DISS - NORFOLK IP21 4BU



PIPFREE!

EO OFFICERS

General Secretary	Joan Hoare, 25 Moor Oak Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire Tel: 0742 666605
Membership Secretaries	Bruce and Christine Wallace, 25 Diabaig, Achnasheen, Ross-shire IV22 2HE Tel: 04457 225
Enquiries Secretary	Janet Evernell 25 Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots, Cambs PE18 9AN Tel: 0480 65774 (not after 9pm)
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Reviews Editor	Helen Holland, Inholm Farm, Plumpton Green, Near Lewes, Sussex Tel: 0273 890405

WHERE TO GET WHAT

Current and old newsletters, SINC, Early Years, Teach Your Own - membership Secretaries.
Growing Without Schooling - Jill Gillings, Seacrest, Clay Head, Baldrine, Isle of Man
Stationary, Introductory Literature, envelope re-use labels (£1.50 per 100), membership forms, posters and handbills - Co-ordinators secretary

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Education Otherwise is a membership organisation whose principle aim is to provide support and an information network for families whose children are being educated outside school, and for those who wish to support the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children.

Our principal aims are as follows:-

- To: Encourage the provision of alternative learning situations outside the school system.
- To: Re-affirm that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education, and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school.
- To: Establish the primary right of children that full consideration, with due allowance for their age and understanding, shall be given to their wishes and feelings regarding their education.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Send a 9" x 4" s.a.e. to:
25, COMMON LANE,
Hemingford Abotts,
Cambridgeshire,
PE18 9AN

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